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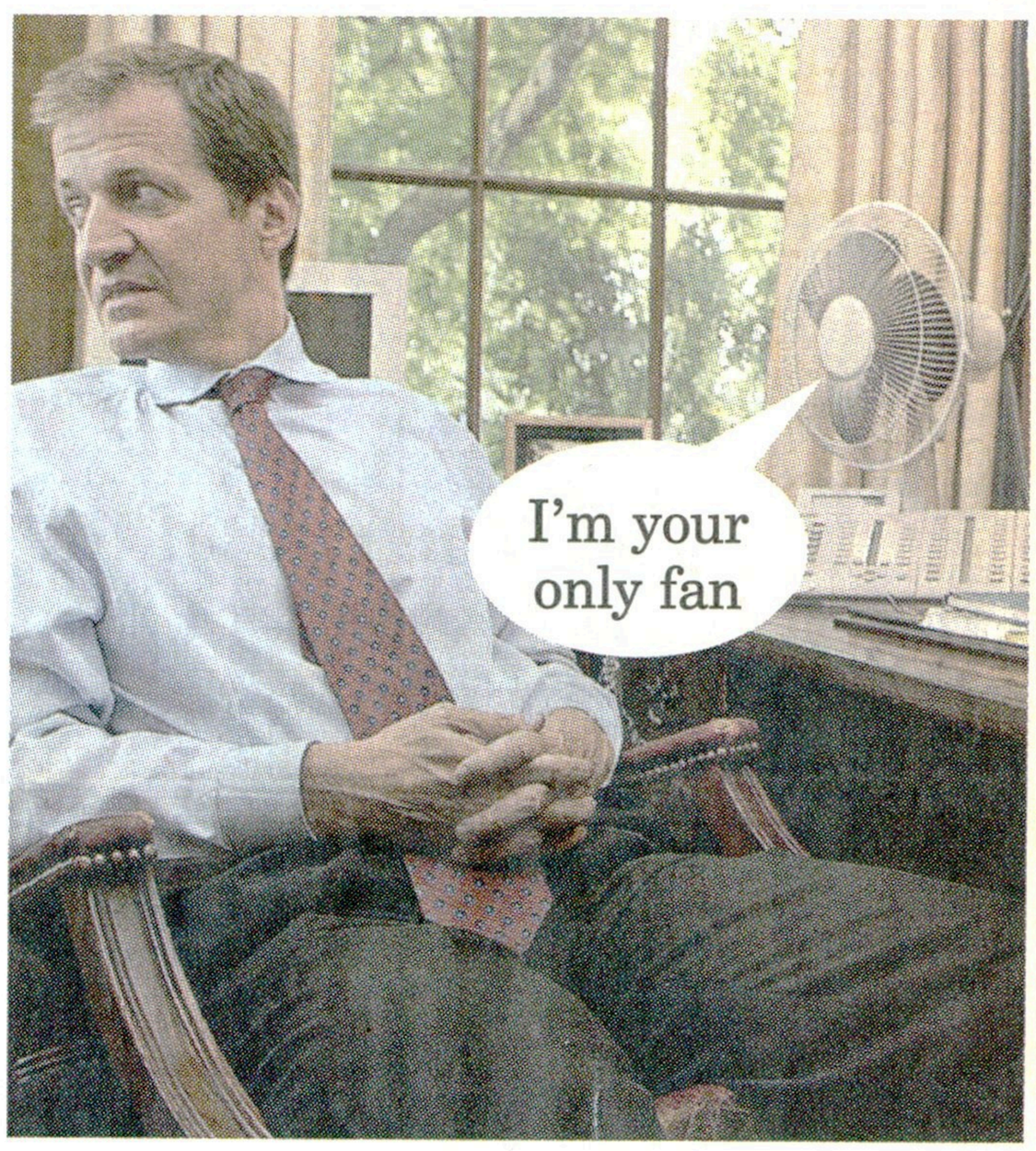

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THERE is no doubt about what constitutes the most important story of these troubled times. I refer, of course, to the serialisation in my newspapers of the autobiography of Mr David Beckham, the World's Most Important Man. Only in my newspapers will you read such never-before-told revelations as:

- Beckham always wears boots when he plays football!
- His wife was once a singer in a pop band!
- Although he was not born in Spain he now plays for a Spanish Club!
- He has never written a word in his life!

Read all this and much, much more in the *Daily Gnome*, *Gnome on Sunday*, *Gnome Sport*, the *Gnomes of the World* and the *Gnomes on Sunday*.

Lord Gnome
Gnomes International
Wapping.

"I'm on the Tommy Atkins diet – muck and bullets"

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6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705. **Email:** strobes@private-eye.co.uk
http://www.private-eye.co.uk

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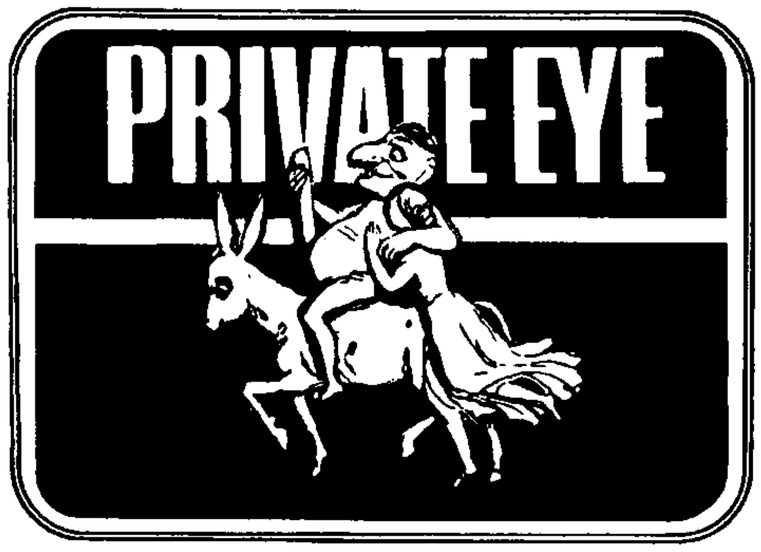


QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Yes, well, I mean, you know, look..."
— Tony Blair, giving evidence to the Hutton Inquiry, 28 August

WHAT A charming tribute to Alastair Campbell by his old friend Roy Greenslade in the *Guardian*! And what a splendid riposte to the "scoffers" – such as the fellow-hack from the *Grauniad* who laughed incredulously when Greenslade claimed that "Campbell had never lied to me, that I had never found him out in a lie, and never been knowingly misled by him". The scoffers may scoff, but Greenslade says he really means it.

Perhaps he has already forgotten the "Black Rod affair", though it took place only last year. In April 2002 Peter Oborne of the *Spectator* reported that Downing Street had pressurised Black Rod to give the PM a more prominent role at the Queen Mother's lying-in-state. Further details of the story were then revealed by Simon Walters in the *Mail on Sunday*. But Campbell assured Greenslade that it was all a malicious invention, and the faithful hack obediently wrote a piece for the *Guardian* website assuring readers that the allegations were "utterly false". (Oborne, he added, was "stark staring bonkers".)

Alas! When the Press Complaints Commission investigated No 10's complaint, it received a memo from Black Rod confirming that the story was true. Downing Street hastily withdrew its PCC case. It was Campbell's denial that had been "utterly false" – and left poor Greenslade looking rather foolish, if not quite stark staring bonkers. In the circumstances, his eulogy to Campbell's own not-lying-in-state was generous indeed.

NO ONE was surprised to see John Scarlett, head of the joint intelligence committee, giving such unequivocal backing to Alastair Campbell last week. For, as every newspaper reminded us, Campbell is a "mate" of Scarlett.

But the friendship itself is rather more puzzling. John Scarlett is a career spook with more than 30 years' service in MI6; and Alastair Campbell hates spooks. "Why are we always so surprised at the notion that MI5 agents bug royals and senior politicians?" he demanded 10 years ago, in his days as a Fleet Street columnist. "What else does anyone imagine they do? You only have to drive past their new HQ or the massive new MI6 offices to realise we have security services way out of proportion to our world standing... Yet because the security services have never been subject to parliamentary control, and MPs are scared stiff of them, their budgets are approved."

If that's how Campbell regards his "mates", God help his enemies.

JUST FANCY THAT!

BRIAN APPLEYARD'S commentary on the Hutton Inquiry in the *Sunday Times* on 24 August picked up on a striking quote from Tony Blair's adviser Philip Bassett. "As work on the dossier progressed the comments were candid," wrote Appleyard. "Bassett said it was 'intelligence-lite'."

Shortage of space presumably precluded the *Sunday Times* from printing Bassett's words in full: "... intelligence-lite, like *STimes* at its worst".

It's Ali over now!

- **Rebekah: Carry On Beeb-bashing** 5
- **Max Hastings, the new Polly Filler** 5
- **Kinnock up the sprout** 7
- **The Curse of Margaret Beckett** 7
- **'I buried Saddam's n-parts in my garden'** 26
- **Privatised military in Iraq** 26

Number crunchings

£400m
■ maximum possible fine that may be levelled on National Grid for power cut in London and South East

£530m
■ dividends paid out to shareholders in National Grid last year

BLAIR, Campbell and Hoon have all had their grillings at the Hutton Inquiry. But what of the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw?

Straw's Houdini like political career has frequently seen him avoid responsibility for devastating cock-ups. Much of this can be attributed to his clever courting of his departmental officials. But Straw was central to the decision to take Britain to war on Iraq. His head of communications, former *Mirror* hack John Williams, offered to re-write sections of the dossier on Iraq's WMD and was a member of fellow former *Mirror* hack Alastair Campbell's shadowy "Iraq Communications Group". Straw took centre stage at the UN in arguing that Saddam was an "imminent threat". He can hardly claim Hoon-like ignorance of what was going on around him. Yet, remarkably, he seems set to emerge smelling of roses. How does he do it?

ASTONISHINGLY, according to the Dear Leader's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell, no minutes were taken of the meeting between him, Alastair Campbell and the Prime Minister, when they met to discuss what to do about Dr David Kelly and his admission that he had spoken to BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan.

Astonishing, but not at all unprecedented. No minutes were taken at another infamous meeting in Number 10 involving Mr Blair's chief of staff – that which discussed Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone's offer of a £1m donation to the Labour Party. This was, of course, at a time when the Government was anxious to ban tobacco advertising, upon which Formula One was – and is – heavily dependent.

Street of Shame

SAY what you like about the government, it has at least given Lord Hutton plenty of fascinating documentary evidence: Downing Street, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office have all yielded up dozens of secret emails, notes, minutes and so on.

But what of Fleet Street, which is forever campaigning for more openness and freedom of information? Glance at the full list of documents submitted to Hutton: when you reach the evidence provided by newspapers and hacks, suddenly the shutters come down. "*Guardian*: not for release – personal witness statement. *The Times*: not for release – personal witness statements and legal correspondence."

The only newspaper to supply any documents at all is the *Financial Times*. Alas, however, they do not add much to the sum of human knowledge. Here, in its entirety, is a note made by political editor James Blitz of his conversation with an unnamed Whitehall official:

[redacted]
he sat beside [redacted] in fac inquiry at war on terror . .that's
hy we suspect the bbc thought...

[redacted] said a "senior intelligence source"

Even this is outdone by Blitz's colleague Christopher Adams, whose offering is solemnly logged by Hutton as "record of Christopher Adams's conversation with third Whitehall official":

by Christopher Adams,
Political Correspondent
[redacted] sounds familiar [redacted]

And, er, that's it.

ACCORDING to Monday's *Grauniad*, the chances of ever squeezing an apology out of the *Mail* "are about as slim as finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq". Not so. Incredibly, and unprecedentedly, Lord Gnome can reveal that *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre has grovelled before one of his hacks.

The man in question is deputy political editor Paul Eastham, whose byline appeared above a report headed "Evasion and the Toadies of Medialand" on 31 July, savaging sycophantic lobby hacks such as Patrick Wintour of the *Guardian*, Peter Riddell of *The Times* and George Pascoe-Watson of the *Sun* ("Toady rating:5/5"). Only readers who studied the small print would have realised that the pen-portraits and toady ratings were in fact compiled by *Mail* hack Robin Yapp, and that Eastham's contribution was limited to a few paragraphs about Tony Blair's last pre-holiday press conference. In fact, Eastham had spent much of the previous day refusing, in telephone calls and emails, to provide information or write the article denouncing his lobby colleagues – pointing out that Associated Newspapers has long accepted that lobby staff should not, indeed cannot, write stories about MPs' sex lives or mount attacks on fellow political journalists.

On the day the piece appeared, Eastham was awoken at 7am by a furious phone call from Pascoe-Watson of the *Sun*, demanding to know why Eastham had stitched him up. Discovering that his name had been put at the top of the feature, the *Mail* man fired off a resignation letter.

Did Paul Dacre "hang tough", in his customary fashion? Not a bit of it. He sent a handwritten note begging Eastham to say, apologising profusely for the *Mail*'s deception and promising that it would never happen again!

OBSERVERS of the career of ageing punk Rod Liddle will be well aware that a Liddle goes a long way. But why is he leaving the *Guardian* to join *The Times*? "It's a nice opportunity with more space and a broader brief," he explains.

On some subjects, however, he may find *The Times* rather less broad-minded. His final column in the *Grauniad* last week denounced the commercial motives of certain relentless BBC-baiters – notably the *Times* and the *Sun*, who were determined to "attack the BBC at every stage, thus undermining public confidence in the corporation". He also put the boot into Tony Ball, head of BSkyB. Will Liddle be writing similar polemics against the Dirty Digger's empire now he's at *The Times*?

Interviewed by *Press Gazette*, Liddle admitted that there might be another reason for his defection: "Oh, and I get better paid." *The Times* will pay him three times as much as the *Guardian*. But with his lucrative *Call My Bluff* fees and countless other contracts, he scarcely needs to worry about the money: his earnings in the last year are not far short of £250,000.

Alas, it seems that the old skinflint doesn't share much of this wealth with his partner Rachel Royce (mother of his two children). Royce revealed a few weeks ago in *The Spectator* that she is so "pathetically poor" she has now had to join the Hearts women-only pyramid-investment scheme in a desperate attempt to reduce her overdraft – "but please don't tell my boyfriend". Liddle, too, wrote about Hearts in his *Grauniad* column in June. It wasn't sustainable, he observed, because "there is a strictly finite supply in this country of stupid, gullible women".

"I want to be a rock star when I'm older"

NOTHING goes down better in the long months of summer than a list that hacks can bicker over, and the *Radio Times* got exactly what they wanted with their "40 all-time TV greats".

"Surprisingly, Mike Leigh's 1970s play *Abigail's Party* was top of the pops in a list dominated by golden oldies," wrote Mark Jeffries in *The Star*, while *Mirror* columnist Matthew Norman was flabbergasted.

"What kind of bozo believes that *EastEnders* (11) is a better programme than *The Office* (26)?" he ranted. "And how can you take it seriously when *The Simpsons* languishes at 33, 32 spots off its rightful place?"

The list, as those who spotted *Z Cars* at number 40 might have twigged, was in alphabetical order.

Passengers fear DVD when flying study reveals

Macclesfield Times

ALTHOUGH Richard "Dirty" Desmond announced two years ago that he wanted to offload the porn side of his Northern & Shell business, nothing much has happened. Suddenly, however, there is a new urgency in his quest for a buyer. He has heard from friends in high places that he can expect a knighthood soon – but only if he has jettisoned all the smut.

Thus it was that executives from O_2, aka BT Cellnet, recently attended a "presentation" at which Desmond tried to persuade them that his Fantasy Channel would be just the thing to show on the new generation of mobile phones. Generous soul that he is, he would include all his "top shelf" mags in the package as well. And the price of this irresistible job-lot would be… £200m.

One startled O_2 man asked what on earth he based the figure on. "Well," Des replied with a grin, "it's a nice round number, innit?" Alas, the O_2 team asked for some documentation. And after studying his wildly optimistic figures and projections, they made their excuses and left.

Is there no public-spirited *Eye* reader with a couple of hundred million to spare? It would be tragic indeed if Desmond's yearning to become Sir Dirty Des were thwarted merely because no one will take *Asian Babes* off his grubby hands.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Ministers would like us to celebrate this event, but we're suspicious about what's going on… The 'A' level used to be a gold standard… But it's been dumbed down. This cheating in our schools has to stop – now."

— Leader column on the 'A' level pass rate rising to 95.4 percent, Daily Star, 14 August

"…give the kids a break. Independent assessors say they have come through the toughest test the British school system can throw at them…We at the *Daily Star* are well impressed."

— Leader column on why Britain's bosses should stop criticising rising 'A' level pass rates, Daily Star, 15 August

UNDETERRED by the fact that nine members of the TV listings department were amongst the first to go in Sly Bailey's cull at *The Moron*, the paper last month launched a new Saturday supplement with the emphatic title "We Love Telly!"

So great is the love and knowledge *The Mirror*'s staff have for the gogglebox that they advertised the new mag in the main body of the paper with a ringing endorsement from Nicki Chapman, a judge on ITV's most popular programme *Pop Idol* – or, as the paper put it, "Fame Academy's Nikki."

THE FINANCE director of Jarvis Rail, during the company's recent unhappy experiences with track maintenance, was a convicted fraudster.

In 1996, Stephen Venney was convicted of defrauding Immingham Conservative Club of such a large sum of money that the club was forced to close. He spent most of the money on family holidays in Turkey and Tenerife, He was sent to prison for 20 months. Not long after he came out, he was hired and promoted by Jarvis. He stayed with the company for four years until May this year, when the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph* revealed his conviction, and he hurriedly resigned. His resignation does not appear to have affected the handsome £75,000 sponsorship deal he arranged between Jarvis and his favourite football club, Grimsby Town. Jarvis confirms that the deal with the football club stays in place, and the firm still uses Blundell Park to train its budding executives (in business, not in football).

HACKWATCH SPECIAL

How to cover the big story
The Sun

BACK at the end of July, with Dr Kelly not yet buried, the *Sun* was not quite sure what to make of the whole affair. Obviously it was all the BBC's fault, but it seemed the Hutton inquiry might yet claim some scalps from outside the corporation.

"Tony Blair appeared a lonely and isolated figure last night as media supremo Alastair Campbell began packing his bags after six years as his closest Downing Street ally," reported political editor Trevor Kavanagh on 26 July. In fact Campbell was merely packing his bags for a holiday in Provence, which by a happy coincidence was also the destination of *Sun* editor Rebekah Wade and her husband Ross Kemp. The Wade-Kemps spent a pleasant day with Campbell and his partner Fiona Millar. Judging by the paper's coverage of the inquiry when they returned, there was one overriding topic of conversation.

6 August: The inquiry has not even started, and already the *Sun* is asking whether we need one at all. "Three months after the war ended, no weapons of mass destruction have yet been found. What joy that must give the anti-war BBC – aka the Baghdad Broadcasting Corporation. Those who wrongly accuse Bush and Blair of deceit over WMD miss the point. We don't need a public inquiry to tell us why. *It's because it suits their twisted agendas*."

12 August: Did someone say twisted? The inquiry has only just kicked off, but the *Sun* seems to already know the result. "ROUND 1 TO CAMPBELL" it declares. "Tony Blair and his media supremo Alastair Campbell emerged as the clear winners from the first day of the Hutton inquiry" – this despite the fact that neither of them appeared.

13 August: BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan gives his evidence. "How ludicrous that so much time, effort and money is being wasted on the dismal efforts of a second-rate hack," muses the paper in its editorial column, before proceeding to devote an entire double-page spread to "GILLIGAN: THE BIG LIE"

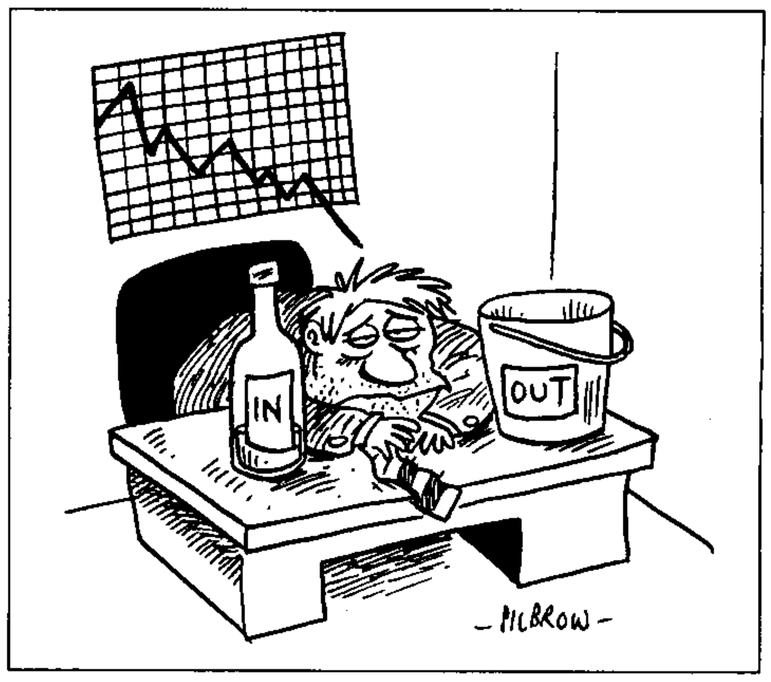
19 August: "'BBC IN ATTACK ON THE HEART OF No10'" is the *Sun*'s headline over the tale told by "Britain's top diplomat" Sir David Manning. Curiously, though Kavanagh calls Sir David "A man driven by truth", he fails to record whether or not he thought the BBC was lying. "Alastair Campbell's evidence to Lord Hutton today will tell us who is winning", concludes Kavanagh. Doesn't he read his own paper?

22 August: Dr Kelly's comment about being "found dead in the woods" emerges. Kavanagh QC suspected as much. "So that's it – the next best thing to a suicide note. Death was on Dr David Kelly's mind long before he even spoke to Andrew Gilligan… Suicide is the ultimate form of vanity – the desire for control over your own destiny." A month before, the paper had denounced those who depicted the late doctor as anything less than saintly as "disgraceful rats". But then the critics in question worked for the BBC.

25 August: "GILLIGAN DOOMED: BBC man 'must quit' after Kelly scandal" intones the *Sun* over a half-page report on… well, nothing really, since the inquiry hasn't even been sitting for the last three days.

26 August: The *Sun* announces that former MI6 officer John Scarlett will appear in front of Lord Hutton. No one knows what he will say, but nevertheless: "SPY WILL CLEAR PM".

27 August : Just as they suspected, "SPOOK CLEARS KING OF SPIN". "Campbell did not sex up dossier," announces the paper. Haven't they done this before?



29 August: "THE SUN SAYS: The chairman of the BBC governors, Gavyn Davies, reveals all that is wrong with BBC news. The sheer incompetence that allowed a grave and false allegation to be broadcast without following the basic rules of journalism exposes the arrogance at the heart of the BBC." And so the editorial goes on for another 250 words. But didn't somebody else appear at the inquiry yesterday? Oh yes, Tony Blair. And what did he say? "PM RAPS BBC BIAS", according to the *Sun*.

30 August: Alastair Campbell announces he is resigning and the *Sun* leads the national mourning. "Alastair Campbell was one of the best Cabinet Ministers this country never had… the ultimate professional … a real driving force in British politics… A shining example of gentleness and love… 21st century man personified, a glamorous, handsome fashion icon". All right, the last two are actually about David Beckham, who warrants as much space as Campbell, but it's a close call. As the editorial concludes, "those who know him best, like him best." And those who like him best will keep the good fight going, as the headline on a brief piece on page 15 shows: "BBC 'UNFAIR'".

How not to cover the big story
Max Hastings

THE SUMMER months are a perfect time for freelance why-oh-why pundits to clean up, as editors at the *Daily Mail* plead for yet more articles headed "Hurrah for the Great British Seaside", "Why I Hate Barbecues", "Why Englishmen Shouldn't Wear Shorts" and so forth. This market has long been dominated by penny-a-liners such as David Thomas, Quentin Letts and Roy Hattersley, but now their dominance is threatened by a most unlikely hack-of-all-trades – Sir Max "Hitler" Hastings, distinguished military historian and former editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

25 June. The appearance at Wimbledon of Ivo Karlovic, a 6ft 10in tennis player, gives Max his cue for a 1,000-word piece on the *Mail*'s leader-page in praise of giants. For, as, Max reminds us, he is himself 6ft 6in tall – though not quite so good at tennis. "I do, however, perform one useful function on court," he chortles. "While my wife commands the baseline with deadly efficiency, I dance around at the net, reaching some wildly unlikely balls, and thoroughly confusing the opposition." And his height has other advantages: "You could sell me at a garden centre, as a useful accessory for cutting hedges, tying up roses, picking apples." Hilarious!

10 July. "Hurrah for Red Meat!" Max bellows in today's *Daily Mail*. For the past four or five years his daughter has been a vegetarian, but "last Sunday I watched with pride and relief as she worked her way through a pound or two of beef at lunch". Hurrah indeed! "The carrot-crunchers, the nut cutlet freaks are in retreat. For those of us who have always believed that real men live off chunks of bleeding meat, this is a moment for rejoicing." Not least, presumably, because it gives him the idea for another chuckleworthy feature.

15 July. In a furious why-oh-why column in the *Evening Standard*, Max reveals that a few weeks ago he had to drive up to London, and duly paid his congestion charge – only to receive a letter four days later demanding a £40 penalty for entering the zone without paying! And so the sorry tale continues for almost 1000 words – letters to Transport for London, letters to Red Ken, all to no avail. Max's anger abates only when "my wife suggested that the joke was on Ken, since my penalty charge had been £40. I would get, well, a trifle more than that, for writing an article for the *Evening Standard*." Just so.

24 July. Trapeze artists working in Britain with the Moscow state circus have been warned that they must wear hard hats or lose their insurance cover. "This is, of course, a story that would get the prominence it received across the media yesterday only during the period between mid-July and mid-September, the silly season," Max writes in the *Daily Mail*. Nevertheless, "we should not laugh at the tale of the hard-hatted acrobats, even in the silly season". Quite so: why look in the mouth of a gift-horse which can earn you a thousand quid from Lord Rothermere for an hour's work?

2 August. Jeffrey Archer's release from jail prompts a 2,000-word essay by Max in the *Mail*. "What is it about crooks, bounders, cads and scoundrels that makes many people eager to buy their wares, read their stories, cheer them on to new excesses?" he demands indignantly. Perhaps he has forgotten that the paper serialising Archer's latest jail diary is, er, the *Daily Mail*.

11 August. It had to happen sooner or later: the phew-what-a-scorcher piece. "My wife looks in mute horror at my own wardrobe for the current crisis," Max reports with a chuckle. "I wear swimming shorts and T-shirts of such vulgarity that my children shield their eyes in embarrassment."

15 August. Having already done his weather riff, Max might be short of a subject. But with felicitous timing the Kennel Club announces that the labrador has again been voted Britain's most popular dog. Such news usually merits a piece by Roy Hattersley and/or his dog Buster, but Max gets in first with 1200 words for the *Mail*'s leader-page listing all the labradors he has owned. "They have the irresistible eyes of a seal crossed with an otter," he coos, "and coats that cry out to be stroked. They are overgrown babies who seldom, if ever, lose their tempers." Just like their owner.

26 August. "Hooray!" Max exults in the *Mail*. "The Tories have done something right." By which he means that IDS has proposed abolishing angling licences, thus giving Sir Max Hastings the chance to bore on about his recent fishing holiday in Scotland. One day his wife accidentally dropped a salmon back into the water after he'd caught it, "yet I couldn't even get cross…You see, this is what a happy fishing day does for you. It makes wild men tranquil and soothes the soul…If Saddam Hussein had got seriously into, say, spinning for pike, he would never have bothered with WMDs." A far-fetched idea, maybe; but is it any less absurd than the sight of Hitler Hastings becoming the new Polly Filler?

"You've done something different to your hair…"

WHATEVER else the Hutton inquiry achieves, it seems likely to terminate the journalistic career of Andrew Gilligan, whose reputation among fellow-hacks has been irretrievably damaged by documents submitted to the inquiry.

On 11 July, Gilligan sent a letter to Donald Anderson MP, chairman of the foreign affairs committee, in reply to a request for more information. "I regret that, as I said to the committee when I gave evidence, I can provide no further information about my source, or the circumstances surrounding my contact with him, because I have a professional and legal duty of confidence to him… Not discussing confidential sources is general BBC policy and universal practice."

All most impressive – except that three days after issuing this robust statement the duplicitous hack composed a long email advising David Chidgey MP (another member of the committee) on what he should ask Dr David Kelly. In the memo Gilligan outed Kelly as the source of a report by "my colleague Susan Watts, science editor of *Newsnight* (who described him as 'a senior official intimately involved with the process of pulling together the dossier')", and urged Chidgey to grill Kelly on his conversation with Watts.

"Not discussing confidential sources" may indeed be general BBC policy, but it is clearly not the "universal practice" of Andrew Gilligan.

Still, even if he is now unemployable as a hack, he could always go into politics. As the *Eye* has revealed, before entering journalism Gilligan worked as a researcher for a Labour MP, and his private memos to members of the foreign affairs committee suggest that he is still eager to help parliamentarians. One document produced by the Hutton inquiry last week, hitherto unreported, is an email dated 30 June from Gilligan to the Tory MP John Maples. The chummy relations between the two men are apparent from the outset: "John, As promised here is my analysis of the Campbell evidence. I've added some further notes at the bottom. Andrew."

By happy coincidence, Maples was the most outspoken supporter of Andrew Gilligan and the BBC on the committee – though he omitted to mention that Gilligan was in fact advising him. By an even happier coincidence, Dr Kelly revealed that among the journalists he had met in the past year was the BBC reporter Jane Corbin, whom he briefed on UN weapons inspections. In private life, Corbin is none other than Mrs John Maples. Since Maples neglected to declare this intimate interest, however, we must assume it has no relevance to his stalwart defence of BBC hacks.

"Oh no – it's Conan the Republican"

HOPES of a reconciliation between John Prescott and the RMT union have been dashed following the deputy prime minister's refusal to hand back the keys of the Clapham flat he has rented from the union on a peppercorn rent for more than 30 years (*Eye* 1085). The issue will now be determined by an eviction hearing at Wandsworth County court on 24 September.

With Prescott having dug his heels in following the serving of a notice-to-quit which expired on 20 June, the contested possession hearing promises to be acrimonious, not least as the RMT will rightly point out that Prescott refused their offer of alternative accommodation, would not be homeless if evicted and has not lived there since 1997, having handed the place on to his son.

Prescott's obduracy over the matter is long-standing. Three years ago he ignored a ruling by the then Parliamentary commissioner for standards, Elizabeth Filkin, that the flat should be declared in the register of members' interests as a benefit in kind.

The average rent for a similar flat in Clapham on the open market would now be around £400 per week – some £345 more than Prescott pays. Having rented the flat since 1970, he has saved around £300,000 at today's prices. If that does not constitute a "benefit in kind", what does?

HOW PFI WORKS

THE NEWS that a PFI hospital scheme in Kent has been aborted because of its "deteriorating financial situation" seemed like a bit of a threat to the promoters of the huge PFI Paddington Health Campus scheme involving the future of the Royal Brompton, Harefield and St Mary's Paddington hospitals.

As reported in the last *Eye*, the cost of this scheme has risen from £360m to £800m, and is still rising. Whether this is what the NHS and its PFI advisers would call a "deteriorating financial situation" is not yet clear, but the scheme's supporters seem determined to spend public money as if it grew on trees.

St Mary's NHS Trust, eager to "decant" their hospital to make way for the development, have applied to Westminster city council planning department for a "change of use" of the massive office building in the Paddington basin known a The Point. The Point was designed by the celebrated architect Sir Richard Rogers for property developers Chelsfield. It is a prestige building that was snapped up by the multinational communications company Orange. Even Orange has discovered that it can't afford £35 per square foot at The Point, and wants to walk away from the site.

Who would save the property developers and the billionaire phone company from the embarrassment of an empty office site? Step forward the NHS, in the shape of the St Mary's hospital trust. The application says that the NHS will lease the building for 37 years. The cost will add enormously to the already deteriorating financial situation of the health service in the area. But cost is not the only problem. The Trust has agreed in its application that only 25 per cent of the building will be devoted to health care – the rest to administrative services. No "in patient" treatment will be permitted, so no patient will be able to stay overnight. Substance abuse clinics are banned entirely, and the ground floor of the building is prohibited. The era of the patientless hospital gets nearer by the day!

THE Department of Work and Pensions' plans to privatise the storage of its 85million confidential files are still under discussion. Meanwhile it may be worth having another glimpse at how securely private storage firms look after files.

One of Britain's biggest file storage firms, and a leading candidate for any contracts is Hays.

In 1998 a 10-year-old arsonist broke into Hays' Erdington warehouse and drove around in a truck before lighting a blaze that took four days to put out. Around 100,000 house deeds stored by Bradford and Bingley were among documents lost in the fire. The kid got into the site by climbing through a hole in the fence.

DOING its best to prevent arms proliferation in "axis of evil" countries, the Ministry of Defence is putting £400,000 towards a massive arms fair in East London next week – and has issued an invitation to Syria.

Defence Systems Equipment International (DSEi) takes place from 9 to 12 September at the ExCel centre in Docklands. This MoD-sponsored event which happens every two years is open only to invited visitors "engaged in bona fide areas of the defence industry".

The lists of exhibitors makes interesting reading. While protestors lay into the big players such as BAe Systems for their part in the bombing of Iraq, it's no surprise to find the MoD supporting their businesses. However there are some arms firms even the MoD should keep at arms-length, one might think.

During DSEi 99 Pakistan Ordnance Factory (POF) was caught out offering to sell anti-personnel landmines for use in Sudan to a documentary team. The MoD police investigated no action was taken. Despite bringing such embarrassment on the fair, POF has been invited back.

DSEi explained to the *Eye*: "POF were not selling landmines at DSEi 99; the incident that you are referring to happened outside the show, in a hotel in London... However, anti-personnel landmines are illegal and we are very careful to ensure that there is no illegal equipment at DSEi. To that effect, we require every exhibitor to sign a compliance to state that they will comply with UK, EU and international law. On site, we will be conducting checks in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police to ensure that no exhibitor is exhibiting illegal equipment or promotional material.

"As far as POF is concerned, the Pakistan High Commission approached us about [them] exhibiting at the exhibition and like every other exhibitor, POF has signed the compliance. In addition we have liaised directly with the High Commission to ensure that there is no repeat of the incident that occurred in 1999."

Dealers from Israel and China will also display their wares.

A second list names those countries invited to attend by the MoD. It includes Syria, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Turkey and Saudi Arabia both have appalling records of human rights abuses.

Invitations issued to Syria and Pakistan were noted with concern in *Eye* 1037during the last DSEi in 2001, but that was before the country was flagged by George Bush as being a supposed "terrorist sponsoring state".

Martin Hogbin of the Campaign Against Arms Trade commented that much of the list was a "roll-call of countries who should not be invited to shop for arms on British soil, at the taxpayers' expense".

The MoD is not the only one inviting people to the exhibition. Exhibition organiser PGI Spearhead Exhibitions also issues invites to those not on the MoD list including Angola, Israel and Afghanistan.

"Is this about the Syrians?" asked an MoD spokesman when the *Eye* called and mentioned DSEi. "I can assure you they definitely won't be attending."

"Um, but they were invited, right?"

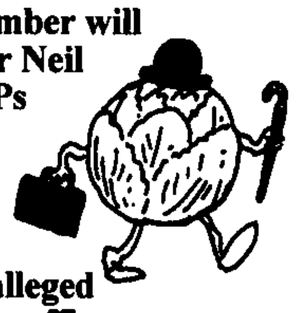
"I don't know, if you've seen the guest list then you're ahead of me."

One organisation not getting an invitation to DSEi is *Private Eye*. Our application for a press pass has been turned down.

'Backbiter'

THE SPROUT

Botching the detectives



TWO DATES in September will be particularly painful for Neil Kinnock. One, when MEPs cross-examine his boss Romano Prodi; the second when the EU's anti fraud unit, Olaf, publishes its findings on alleged fraud in the EU's statistics office, Eurostat.

Two accused Eurostat officials in Luxembourg – Yves Franchet and Daniel Byk – were earlier "removed" from their jobs, while the French and Luxembourg police probed four companies they are alleged to have created to act as a slush fund. Many have questioned Kinnock's decision to place them in his own department, the directorate-general for administration, pending the outcome of the investigation. For one thing, Kinnock's office is conducting its own investigation into Eurostat. For another, his track record of busting corrupt eurocrats isn't exactly impressive. Over the summer, for example, his officials admitted that a Greek EC official gave a whopping £19m road building contract to her husband. At least he was the boss of a Greek road building company.

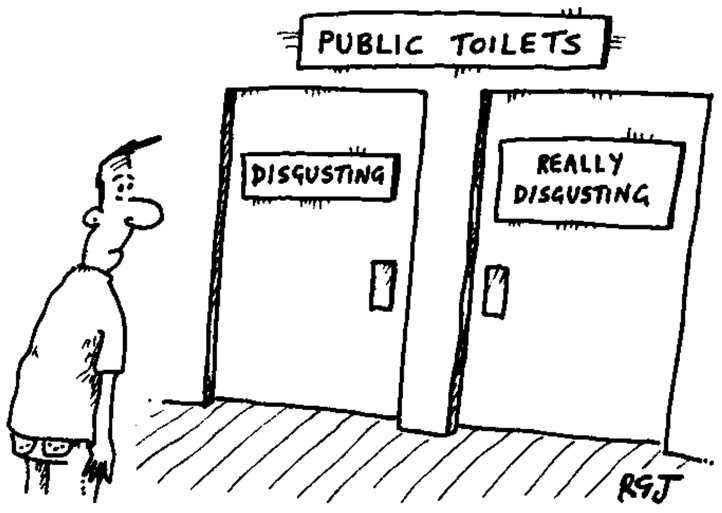
A bigger scandal is soon to dog Kinnock from yet another whistle-blower, Warren Garrett, a former public policy adviser at Camden council. His case, due to be investigated by the European ombudsman this autumn, might expose Kinnock as personally helping Labour party cronies who cleared themselves of any wrongdoing in 1999 – the year Kinnock became chief of EU reform.

Uclaf (Olaf's predecessor) had unequivocally accused Camden council officials of "criminal offences". Centre of that storm was former chief executive of Camden council and erstwhile Kinnock speech-writer Steve Bundred (*Eyes passim*), who is now chief executive of the Audit Commission. Bundred was accused in 1998 by Uclaf of trying to bail out the illegal Migrant Training Company, which had been set up by one of his own council officials who signed off £500,000 of EU grants which were pumped into the firm. Garrett, despite pleas to Kinnock, was royally screwed by Camden officials, who secured his departure and financial ruin.

But the confidential Uclaf report has now surfaced. It reveals the full extent of the corruption charges against Bundred and co. Confidential letters sent to Kinnock (from the Camden accused and even David Blunkett) show that the former Labour leader had a hand in letting the same Camden cronies investigate and subsequently clear themselves of Uclaf's charges. As EC vice-president, he was obliged under his code of conduct to ensure that Uclaf's recommendations were carried out – not to be swayed by his own national, political interests.

Bundred and his colleagues appealed to the former Labour leader to investigate Uclaf after it concluded they were all corrupt, while commissioning their own report on the MTC. Happily, it found them entirely innocent of any wrongdoing.

● The above article was compiled by *The Sprout* magazine, available in selected bookshops. See www.thesprout.net



POLICE 5

AFTER the collapse of the case against DC Brian Stevens, liaison officer for the victims' families in the Soham murder case, the papers rushed to speculate about the fate of other men arrested as part of the anti-paedophile campaign Operation Ore.

The Stevens case was dismissed after an expert witness for the prosecution, Brian Underhill of "high technology crime consultants" Celt Limited, was found to have made several mistakes in his analysis of the detective's laptop computer.

According to the *Mail on Sunday* on 24 August, "600 child porn sentences could be quashed" because of Underhill's involvement in their trials. Jim Bates, president of the Institution of Analysts and Programmers, told the paper that he was "calling for an inquiry into all Underhill's cases", and that "any solicitor worth their salt will be looking to see if they can get the case thrown out simply because he is listed as the expert witness, and who can blame them?"

But Bates is hardly a disinterested observer in all this. As well as heading the IAP, a professional guild complete with its own coat of arms, since its incorporation in 1993, Bates runs his own company, Computer Investigations, which has undertaken forensic work for several police forces. It is one of Celt Limited's biggest rivals. Indeed, in the Stevens case, while Underhill served as an expert witness for the prosecution, Bates was performing the same function in the policeman's defence – something the paper did not feel the need to point out in their report.

On his company website (www.computer-investigations.com), Bates devotes more than 8,000 words to trashing Nick Webber, Underhill's business partner in Celt Limited. Since the two men clashed during a similar case at Hove Crown Court in September 2000 (an episode which the judge described as "mud-slinging between experts… never a very edifying spectacle for the jury"), Bates has offered "to provide free forensic services in any case involving Mr Webber's alleged expertise".

With expert witnesses putting so much effort to destroying each other, nailing child abusers seems something of a secondary consideration.

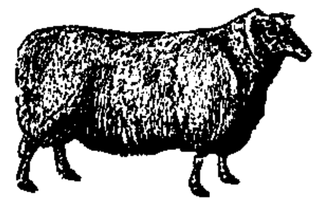
ROGER "Currant Bun" Lyons, MSF-Amicus general-secretary, who was thwarted in his bid to secure himself a pension-boosting 30 per cent pay rise by the union's national executive committee (*Eye* 1075), is to receive a mere 20 per cent increase instead. The deal, which is backdated to January, was brokered by former TUC general-secretary John Monks. It will set up "Currant Bun" nicely ahead of his retirement in September 2004.

Lyons, who clears his desk at the union's HQ this month will serve out his last year as TUC president on a salary combined with benefits, excluding the use of his chauffeur-driven car, amounting to just over £103,000 – making him the country's highest paid general-secretary. Critics of the deal, many of whom are MSF-Amicus activists, are upset that not only did MSF officers have to settle for a rather more meagre three per cent pay rise earlier this year, but also that under Lyons' leadership the union has lost over 100,000 members.

ANTI-union activity continues at Sky's Scottish call centre and broadcasting centre, with staff now unable to use their work computers to access a website providing employment protection information.

More than 5,000 staff at the two sites in Dunfermline and Osterley found they were unable to view the BECTU union website. The Union has carefully checked for any fault on its site and, as it could be accessed from everywhere else, could only conclude it was being blocked by the broadcaster.

'Blackleg'



DOWN ON THE FARM

ON JULY 2001, just when the foot and mouth epidemic was all but over, the Welsh Assembly announced that as a precautionary measure it was going to slaughter tens of thousands of healthy sheep around the Brecon Beacons.

This so enraged Janet Hughes, a Welsh environmental sciences teacher, that she bought 10 sheep and took the Assembly to court. She wanted a ruling that the cull was illegal, because the Animal Health Act 1981 only empowered the Government to kill animals when either they were infected or had been directly exposed to infection. Realising that this could be a dangerous test case for the whole of the pre-emptive cull policy under which for months it had been killing millions of healthy animals for no reason, Defra joined the action to oppose Janet's plea. The case reached the Court of Appeal in Cardiff, where Lord Justice Latham upheld the slaughter and Defra's policy.

Paying lawyers to fight her case had cost Janet her life savings. But there was more to come. In January this year two bailiffs turned up at Janet's home to claim £17,000 for Defra's legal costs, even though the officials working for Defra's Secretary of State Margaret Beckett had only joined the action of their own volition. When the bailiffs had listed everything they could see, including the car Janet needed for her work, and a toy quad bike and jeep belonging to her 12-year old son Matthew, they said they would soon be returning to remove all these goods in part-payment of Defra's bill. They justified taking Matthew's toys on the grounds that a child's property belongs to its mother. Only when uproar broke out in the press, and lawyers pointed out that the bailiffs had no right to remove the toys, was Matthew's property struck from the list.

Janet's appeal to the High Court in London against the possession order, was cursorily turned down – her appeal papers were returned stamped "application refused" in an unstamped envelope.

Various friends and sympathisers were meanwhile rallying to her support, contributing a further £4,000 to the "Save Our Sheep" appeal fund. Last month came Defra's final demand. If Janet would hand over the £4,000 in the appeal fund, they would not trouble her further. So Beckett's lawyers are £13,000 out of pocket, which is tragic. Matthew can keep his toys. For Janet Hughes a two-year nightmare is finally at an end. Of course the Defra officials were well aware that their pre-emptive cull policy was illegal (tests showed that, as elsewhere, not one of the tens of thousands of sheep killed on the Brecon Beacons was infected). But in 2002 they took the precaution of rushing through an Animal Health Act which now gives them powers to kill any animal they want, without having to give a reason. As a final joyous twist, under the new Act it will in future be a criminal offence for people like Janet to dare to challenge their actions.

'Muckspreader'

TAKE CARE

CARE HOME owners have hitherto been able to take on new staff, pending subsequent satisfactory checks by the Criminal Records Bureau. Homes have now been told that they can no longer do this and must wait for clearance before hiring, as the CRB is generally meeting its 20-day target.

Sadly delays of even a few weeks is longer than many applicants are prepared to wait, if they can find work elsewhere without the hassle of a CRB check. So what should the understaffed care home do in the meantime? Take on agency staff, says the National Care Standards Commission. But agency workers who were in post before July 2001 do not need a CRB check. Brilliant!

ITV

Rosemary and Thyme (ITV1)
Sweet Medicine (ITV1)

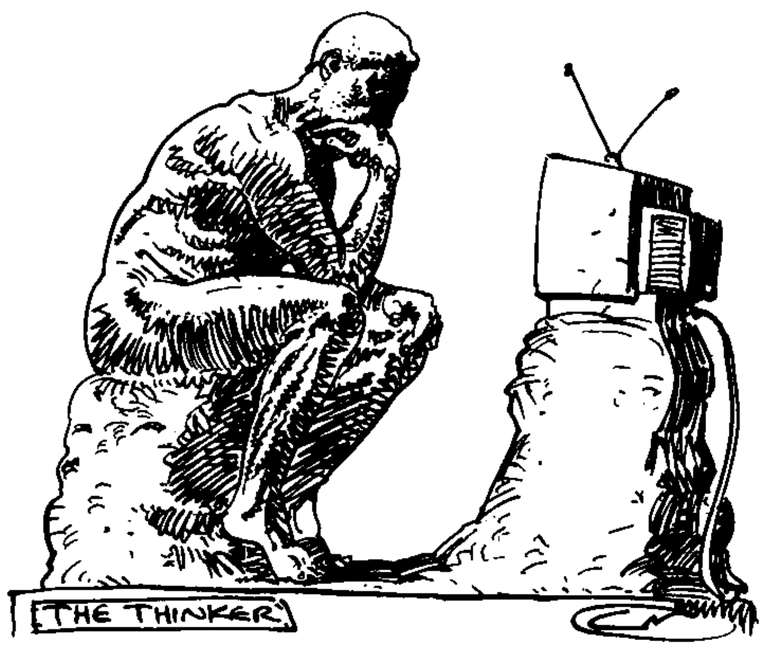
ESTHER RANTZEN and Cyril Fletcher filled many hours of television with the odd coincidence of names and professions: the lawyer called Sue Always, the gynaecologist who happened to have been baptised Seymour Beaver. Such things do happen at the font, but rather less defensible is writers laboriously imposing puns on characters in order to get a title.

Worryingly, both of ITV1's first autumn drama launches suffer from such silly christenings. In **Rosemary And Thyme**, Felicity Kendal plays a leading horticulturist called Rosemary Boxer. It's just about plausible that someone called after a herb would go into the gardening business – name becoming destiny – but unlikely that she would happen to meet in a hotel a former WPC called Laura Thyme and set up a detective agency with her.

Crime stories are withered by too many coincidences and this has one huge and flashing example every time the characters are introduced. It also alienates rather than entices the audience. Paradoxically, a series called *Boxer and Laura* would sound rather more mysterious and interesting.

But, as if ITV is going for the Rantzen/Fletcher Memorial Prize, its other drama start-up, *Sweet Medicine,* turns out to be about a family of GPs called the Sweets. The character-establishing and plot-points of the first half-hour entirely pass the viewer by because we're thinking that – if only the central clan had been called Hard or Bent or even Private – the title could have been less twee and the series rather more enjoyable.

Dramas which manage to irritate with their list of *dramatis personae* are going to have to do a lot to win the viewer over, and neither of these do. *Rosemary And Thyme* – though carrying a 2003 copyright line and featuring cars with very recent number-plates – has a bewildering air of the 1930s in every other respect. ITV1 has done a lot of good business with the Agatha Christie estate and



this series, scripted by veteran dramatist Clive Exton, feels like an unofficial extension of the franchise.

There are batty house-keepers called Mrs Potts and a doctor handing out digitalis pills for ticker trouble which, as all Christie lovers know, is a medicine derived from a poison found in gardens. The exposition is so clunky that, for example, we know a character is taking pills because his watch beep-alarm suddenly goes off in mid-sentence and he bellows: "Time to take a pill!"

Publicity has focused on the fact that Felicity Kendal is playing her "first television role for nine years" but the truth, as everyone knows, is that she's been hired to repeat the one she played more than 25 years ago in *The Good Life*. Her pixie face and award-winning arse are remarkably well-preserved but she can't do anything to distract from the fact that she's appearing in a series which can only exist because an exec watching Alan Titchmarsh one day thought: Hey, I know — *The Gardening Detectives*. After episode one, can anyone really imagine watching another five murder mysteries in which the clues all lie in herbs and grasses?

Perhaps the only thing going for *Rosemary And Thyme* is that it has the genre of horticultural-mystery to itself. The other pun-powered drama **Sweet Medicine** is attempting to follow the epidemic of GP and hospital dramas.

Even more shamelessly, the Sweets' practice is in rural Derbyshire so that it rapidly becomes clear that this is ITV1's attempt to get the paddles on to the chest of the now dead *Peak Practice* and resurrect it in the schedules. Despite all the publicity about the crippling hours and suicide rates among GPs, this lot are inevitably young and attractive. Nick with his six-pack is married to Debs with her gamine glow, but frankly he might as well stick in his car beside the "Doctor On Call" sign another one reading "Adultery Waiting To Happen".

Nigel Pickard, the new controller of ITV1, can't be directly blamed for this stuff, which was commissioned before he arrived. But, if this is the quality of the autumn drama at his disposal, he and we should be alarmed. Continuing his new schedule's annoying habit of significant names, perhaps he should commission a drama about telly execs called *Barrel-Scraper and Ataloss*.

'Remote Controller'

GOING LIVE

THE ITV evening news on 26 August cut to Mark Webster, who had a report about a street said to be "Britain's worst rat run".

When Webster was there, alas, there wasn't a car in sight.

"THIS is a media circus", commented Mark Austin in a report about the melee of hacks and camera crews outside the High Court during the Hutton inquiry (ITV News, 28 August).

Minutes before, Austin presented his own live piece from amid the scrum: "Let's go live now to our political correspondent John Ray." The camera panned left and there was Ray, standing 10 feet away … with a separate crew of his own.

MEDIA NEWS

BBC boss Greg Dyke's soothsaying at the Edinburgh TV festival – he predicted that within a decade ITV would jettison its "regional output, children's programming, religious programming, education, current affairs and the arts" and become a satellite-only channel – seemed familiar to some of his old colleagues.

Back in the early 1990s, the boss of LWT suggested just such a move as a way that the network could save the millions of pounds it was spending on its analogue licence each year, and jettison all its tiresome public service obligations at the same time. His name? Greg Dyke.

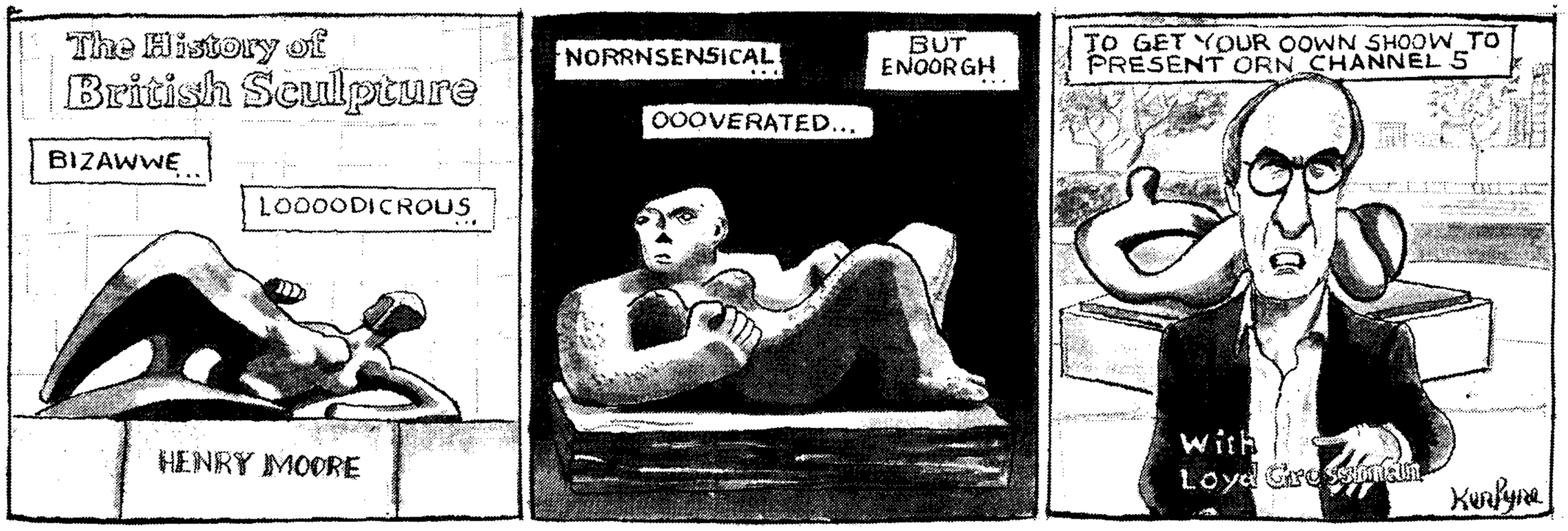
ITV's *Package Holiday Undercover* programme contained advice about finding holiday bargains. "Shop around but don't crawl the High Street – go to Teletext".

A huge puff for Teletext followed. "Nick's really catching on here," says the presenter as Nick opens yet another Teletext page: "He's saved a fortune!"

Teletext is, of course, ITV's very own listings service and tour operators pay to advertise their holiday bargains on it.

Warballs

'Modernism died on September 11,' he declares. 'At a time of mourning, people no longer wanted panoramic views across a river out of vast glass windows.' The evidence for this? 'Sales of glass and steel furniture plummeted, while sales of burgundy mohair throws rocketed.' — *Observer Food Monthly* interview with Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen.



"BBC 3 is about celebrating diversity, not ticking boxes" – so says its controller Stuart Murphy as its "new season" is unveiled. "I think we're really starting to get under the skin of the audience, find out what they want."

So far, the ratings suggest that the audience hasn't wanted anything that BBC 3 had to offer and it looks as though little will change now.

The channel is still dominated by celebs. There's a series presented by someone billed as "Kylie's-ex" and another by Jerry Hall and by Johnny Vaughan, who has bombed consistently since launch night and has been given yet another series to bomb in.

As for news, there's no mention of it in the launch coverage – something that will be of interest, no doubt, to culture secretary Tessa Jowell.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Vault, ITV

Melanie Sykes: In which European city was the first opera house opened in 1637?

Contestant: Sydney.

Sykes: In the Bible, which disciple betrayed Jesus?

Contestant: Solomon.

Sykes: What is the name given to the condition where the sufferer can fall asleep at any time?

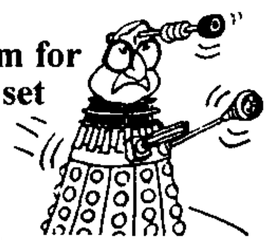
Contestant: Nostalgic.

Capital FM early show

James Cannon: Which of these actors did NOT star in a *Carry On* film? Sid James, Kenneth Williams, Hattie Jacques or Laurence Olivier?

Contestant: Hattie Jacques.

BIRTSPEAK



THE BBC's Byzantine system for commissioning programmes is set for "significant change". The "buyer-seller relationship", in which controllers were able to reject bad programme ideas at an early stage is now thought to be too "subjective".

Instead, a system of "watering holes" will be used to make decisions "less based on personal opinion". Thus, expensive American facilitators have been shipped over to "brainstorm" ideas and develop "wish lists" together with "champions" and "coaches".

According to *Ariel*, these watering holes will be "places where animals hold a truce as they drink. It implies that rank is of little significance at these meetings – where in the wild the pecking order is temporarily suspended around the water's edge". Hours can now be wasted championing hopeless ideas without being told to shut up by bosses.

Recent triumphs include a brainstorming for a Radio Five Live programme, which produced a "wish list" headed by the thought that the programme "should not be boring" and should be presented by "a woman and a comedian" … just like all the others.

"The Skill exchange BBC Attachment scheme's August event has a Creativity theme. Caroline will be talking about creativity across the BBC, including …a number of initiatives like:

ELEVATOR PITCH: The idea of the elevator pitch is that if you had someone important in a lift while it travelled 3 or 4 floors, you'd be able to get your idea across and accepted before the doors opened!"

Billing for a 3 hour talk from Caroline Van Den Brul, "director of Inspire".

FOCUS ONLINE

WAS IT just coincidence that culture secretary Tessa Jowell announced last week that the BBC's online service would be the subject of a government review, at a time when the government and the corporation are at war with each other over the Kelly affair?

Yes and no. In fact, the review had already been signposted back in April. But that Jowell should have confirmed its launch and its scope just as No. 10 is doing everything in its power to run down the Beeb inevitably aroused suspicions that this was another New Labour lackey eager to win approval from her political masters.

Like most of her predecessors, Jowell is essentially clueless when it comes to the media. She first proved this two years ago with her outraged comments about the controversial *Brass Eye* paedophile special, a programme she was forced to admit she hadn't even seen. To confirm her ignorance on all matters televisual, last week she called for more repeats to be shown on British TV – clearly the comment of someone who hasn't turned on her set in the last few months.

Jowell has entrusted the online review to Philip Graf; but unfortunately he is no expert either. As chief executive of Trinity Mirror, not only did he preside over sustained falls in circulation across all the Mirror Group titles, but also had to witness the demise of the vast majority of its internet ventures after throwing £90m at them. Nice work!

Graf has been asked to determine whether the £100m or so that is spent every year on BBC Online is still being channelled into areas that meet the aims of its charter.

The main complainants are the usual national press titles and news providers whose web offerings are finally beginning to claw back some of the cash that was squandered during the dotcom crash. For obvious reasons, the likes of Guardian Unlimited, Times Online and FT.Com are not terribly enthusiastic about having their patch queered by the BBC. Media group Pearson also claims that the Corporation has used Online to muscle in on its digital educational business. Quite where this leaves director-general Greg Dyke, who was forced to admit in May that he still owned shares in Pearson, is anyone's guess.

In its defence, the BBC has already released an independent report it commissioned from consultants KPMG which claims that any damage to the market caused by the Beeb behemoth could only be found "at the margins" and that the promotion of BBC Online may have helped to push up internet use across the population as a whole. So everyone's a winner then!

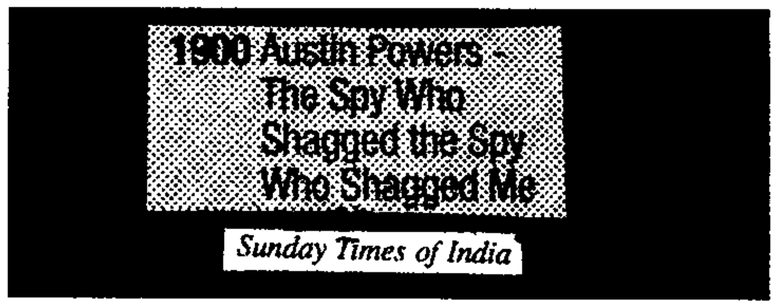
Independent the report may have been but, as any fule kno, consultants can always be relied upon to pipe the tune of the company who pays. It may or may not be relevant that last year KPMG signed an agreement with BBC Technology whereby the BBC was paid to supply streaming technology to the consultancy firm to improve its internal communications.

Not to be outdone by Jowell, the Conservative spokesman John Whittingdale immediately announced that if his party won the next election (!) it would scrap both the BBC's digital and online networks. Which leaves one wondering why the Tories have bothered to appoint David Elstein to conduct a review into that very matter. As the last *Eye* recorded, the alliance between "Death on the Rock" Elstein and the Conservative Party is already an unlikely one. What makes it even stranger is that at the same time as he is undertaking this review, Elstein has also been planning a new management structure for ITV. Only the Tories could fail to see the absurdity of appointing to sit in judgement over the Beeb a man who could soon be in the pay of its direct competitor.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Liza Minnelli the Elephant



Plugged In

Timbuck-who?

IT's hard to believe. But The Sun has achieved the impossible. We've found someone who's never heard of David Beckham. His name is Agalhi Ag Mohammed, and he lives near Timbuktu. You really should get out of the tent more, Agalhi. There must be someone in the Sahara with a Sky dish.

The Sun
(prop: R. Murdoch)

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

SUPERMODELS

DOING THE ROUNDS

Off Target

WHAT do you do if you can't meet the 13-week government target for waiting for an appointment? Answer: close the waiting list. This tactic has been adopted by the Northwest Leeds area adult psychological and therapy service, based at Maltham House and part of Leeds Mental Health NHS trust. Other reasons for closure are that those lucky enough to get an initial appointment then have to wait nine to 12 months for treatment and that in the last eight years, the unit has been fully staffed for only two six-month periods. In an understaffed NHS governed by targets, not treatment, the only way to get ticks in all the right boxes is to restrict the service.

The absurdity of the target culture is well articulated by Richard Harrad, clinical director of Bristol Eye Hospital. He has calculated that 25 patients with diabetes or glaucoma went blind through lack of follow-up, because of the drive to meet new patient appointment targets. Hardly treatment according to clinical need.

As Dr Harrad put it: "This figure undoubtedly underestimates the true incidence and of course there is the large backlog of patients still to be seen. One particularly sad case was that of an elderly lady who was completely deaf and relied on signing and lip-reading for communication. She lives with her disabled husband, who, like her, is completely deaf. Her follow-up appointments for glaucoma were delayed several times and during this time her glaucoma deteriorated and she became totally blind."

In the new NHS, trolleys are re-designated as "beds on wheels" and corridors and treatment rooms are redesignated as "pre-admission units" to give the illusion of better care. MD's nearest four hospitals are bottom of the league table, with not one star between them, but this absurd system takes very little account of clinical performance (which is often excellent in Bristol and Bath).

For most of the NHS targets, there is no evidence that they improve care, but plenty that they distort it. As orthopaedic surgeons at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough, put it: "Why is the same target used for a minor graze as for a major trauma case? We have had numerous examples of patients being admitted purely to avoid breaching the four-hour accident and emergency wait. At best this has ended in an immediate discharge for an inappropriate admission with all the attendant increase in costs and decrease in free beds. At worst the patient is transferred without the resuscitation and immediate treatment they need."

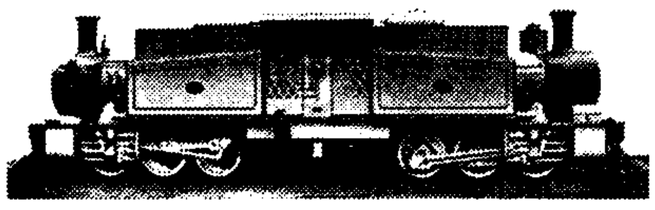
With such severe financial penalties associated with multiple breaches, the pressure to conform is huge, and it's going to get even worse. By 1 March 2004 all trusts are obliged to admit, transfer or discharge 100 per cent of their casualty patients within four hours. However, a Department of Health memo, dated 16 June, suggests a possible opt out: "Clarification of the definition of 100 per cent is currently being discussed with the professional bodies." More innumeracy from the Commission for Health Improvement, which has published target thresholds for the management of chronic diseases. Band A is for patients in whom "the probability of this level of improvement happening by chance is less than 1 per cent but more than 1 per cent". At least everyone will hit that target.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

TRUTH IS, THE HOSPITAL CAN NOT AFFORD ANOTHER MALPRACTICE SUIT....
WE'LL BE RIGHT BESIDE YOU, REMINDING YOU NOT TO SAY ANYTHING THAT WILL PREJUDICE THE HEARING
...SO YOUR FIRST CONTACT WITH THE PATIENT WAS...
NIL BY MOUTH
NIL BY MOUTH



SIGNAL FAILURES

Safety lesson for Jarvis

ON 21 August Network Rail was alerted to a problem at Milton Keynes station where steel and nylon components designed to fasten rails to sleepers had been swept up by passing express trains, injuring two waiting passengers.

Closer inspection revealed that 40 steel clips were missing, 14 of them consecutive. In other words, a rail carrying 110mph trains was unsecured for 10 yards or more. One of NR's trusty engineering contractors had been working on the tracks the previous night. Which one? None other than Jarvis, the company at the centre of the Potters Bar crash investigation.

That same morning, Jarvis staff at Retford discovered a broken rail on the same 125mph line as the Hatfield and Potters Bar crashes (both caused by track defects). That's such a serious fault the signallers must stop the trains immediately. But the contractors rang Jarvis control, who rang NR control, who were then horrified when they found the local signallers had not been told of the broken rail. A leaked NR log notes: "Jarvis were requested to have the staff seen by a safety mentor to explain the error of their ways."

BRITAIN'S first high-speed railway is due to open this month, just 22 years after the French opened theirs.

Other big European countries started their high-speed programmes by linking their own major cities (eg Paris-Lyon, Madrid-Seville) before turning to international links. But as Britain still eschews a transport policy, it's only prepared to spend serious billions on new tarmac. Our railways will remain Victorian for the foreseeable future, with the exception of the Channel Tunnel rail link (CTRL). But that is being built not for policy reasons but to stop French presidents smirking when riding Eurostar on our embarrassing commuter tracks.

Stop-start Eurostar journeys will continue for four years. The main congestion is in south London, but the first CTRL section is at the Folkestone end. The full CTRL will be useful as commuters will have Eurostars off their tracks, but it's way down the list of high-speed lines Britain needs. Eurostar traffic, falling since 2000, is far smaller than London-Birmingham-Manchester traffic. That's where our first high-speed line should be; instead we're blowing £10bn upgrading the vintage west-coast line from 110mph to 125mph.

The £5.2bn CTRL is financed by the usual public-private stitch-up (*see Eye* 1051); taxpayers contribute £5bn to construction and then shell out as things go wrong. When deputy PM John Prescott bailed out CTRL in 1998 the new deal was based on high forecasts for Eurostar, a hangover from Richard Branson's plan to take Eurostar to 15 million passengers a year. Eurostar has never carried more than 7.15 million passengers in a year, and Virgin's involvement in Eurostar was cut short.

Virgin's wild claim was encouraged by consultant Jim Steer. He's now director of planning at the "strategic" rail authority, which is trying to organise a premium express commuter service over the CTRL when the second section into St Pancras opens in 2007. [The SRA is also in favour of the proposed Crossrail east-west link in London. When Crossrail was last mooted in 1993, Steer acted as an expert witness *against* it for Tower Hamlets council.] The costly CTRL won't carry many trains unless domestic or freight trains use it too. Under Prescott's deal, the state pays track charges for premium commuter trains whether they run or not.

The choice of St Pancras as CTRL terminus was based on completion by 2007 of the Thameslink 2000 expansion (work is yet to start). CTRL passengers will descend on Thameslink and Tube services already bursting at the seams. The Victoria line may have to close for renovation.

Britain will conclude that 190mph trains are a non-starter, despite their success overseas. Transport secretary Alistair Darling has already rubbished the SRA's suggested London-Edinburgh high-speed link. Poor results from the CTRL are just what the mighty road and air lobbies need to keep high-speed rail off the agenda for another 22 years.

'Dr B. Ching'

THE COMMUTERS
LOOK! I'VE BOUGHT A FOLD-UP...
I'M GOING TO USE IT TO GET TO THE STATION IN THE MORNING...
SIGNAL FAILURE DELAYS
WATERLOO STATION 800 YARDS
grizelda

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

DOLPHIN UNFRIENDLY

THE FUTURE of Dolphin Square in Pimlico, London's poshest housing estate, is uncertain following a £200m bid from a consortium led by Justin Cadbury. Former residents include Harold Wislon, Christine Keeler, Princess Anne and the lovely, charming Mosleys (fascist leader Sir Oswald was arrested at the couple's flat in 1940). Handy for Westminster, it is home to some 75 MPs, lords and bishops, and thousands of lesser mortals.

A long-running dispute between freeholders Friends Provident and Westminster council, which took out a lease on the estate in 1964, has once more thrown a spotlight on Westminster's bizarre housing policies. Rather than rent directly from the council, residents of the 1,050 tenanted flats pay rent to the Dolphin Square Trust (DST). To prevent the *hoi polloi* having any say in the running of the DST, it is tightly controlled by an eight member committee of management (COM) who are self-electing and answerable to nobody other than, er, the membership of the DST — which is made up of 10 present and former members of the COM. Former trust chairmen include Sir Alan Dawtry, a former Westminster council town clerk, and Morris Stonefrost, the GLC's last chairman. The current chair is former Westminster council leader Dame Shirley Porter's former chief executive, Rodney Brooke.

Members of the COM each live in a flat in the Square, for which they set their own rents at well below market rates. For instance David Weeks, Porter's former deputy, sat on the COM for 15 years up to 1998. To get around the awkward fact that he owes Westminster a cool £43m surcharge for his part in the "homes for votes" gerrymandering scandal of the 1980s, the committee allowed him to transfer his penthouse flat to his children's names — even though he continues to live there with his wife.

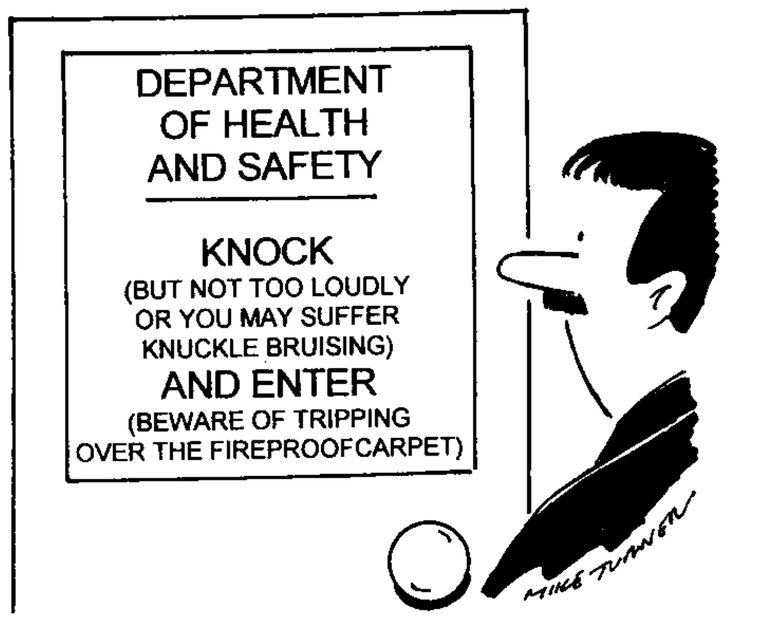
In 1991 the trust de-registered as a housing association, in order to keep black people out. The downside for the residents of this Tory redoubt was that they thereby lost the sacred "right-to-buy".

The current dispute with Friends Provident arises because of the owners' tedious insistence that the council should discharge its legal and financial responsibilities by collecting the correct commercial rates from the luxurious 250 bedroom Dolphin Hotel at the heart of the square. For years the council has pretended the loss-making hotel is "short let apartments" and has therefore only charged low council tax rates – thereby doing itself out of millions of pounds in revenue.

Unless this is speedily resolved, Friends Provident is threatening to withdraw from a deal which would have seen it buy out Westminster's interest in the estate for some £100m. The deal would have seen 60 new affordable homes allocated for key workers, and essential repairs and maintenance on the tenanted flats and communal areas carried out.

With Friends Provident's patience wearing thin with Westminster, tenants are worried that they won't see the promised improvements. But at least the council has looked after its Tory friends.

PS Talking of friends, the estate's Blue Dolphin social club has booked Jeffery Archole to give residents an entertaining talk about his prison experiences in the autumn.


DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY
KNOCK
(BUT NOT TOO LOUDLY OR YOU MAY SUFFER KNUCKLE BRUISING)
AND ENTER
(BEWARE OF TRIPPING OVER THE FIREPROOFCARPET)
MIKE TURNER

MAKING A SPLAT

HAVING missed its *ninth* projected opening date, Bath's ill-fated Spa project has hit yet more problems. Sir Nicholas Grimshaw, architect of the hideous glass monstrosity, is refusing to "sign off" the building because someone used, er, the wrong type of paint to line the Spa's four pools. The delays have caused havoc with the finances of Thermae, the Dutch company chosen to run the Spa. It has asked Bath and North-east Somerset council (Banes) for a £1.4m handout to keep it afloat until the Spa opens and has put 53 staff including therapists and pool attendants on gardening leave for eight weeks because there is nothing for them to do.

These pieces of bad news were revealed to councillors at a secret crisis meeting on Tuesday last week. They also heard that the cost of the project, now two years late, has soared to £30m – some £15m more than the original estimate. After details were leaked to the press, hysterical Banes bosses demanded that all those who attended the meeting be made to sign a declaration denying they were the source of the leak.

Meanwhile the council has gone cap-in-hand to the Millennium Commission to fund a canopy for the Spa's rooftop pool. When it was designed no one considered the sport local seagulls would have, dive-bombing the pool and crapping on bathers. But then, as Bath council-tax payers, they are used to that.

HOGG ROAST

A FASCINATING insight into the Labour party's regard for truth comes from Paisley, near Glasgow. The day before the May council elections, the local party distributed a vicious leaflet attacking Iain Hogg, candidate for the Scottish Socialist Party in Renfrewshire council's Seedhill ward. Local Labour bigwigs have had the knives out for Hogg since he defected to the SSP last year because he opposed the council's plan to semi-privatise local schools in a PFI contract. The leaflet on behalf of Labour candidate Rayleen Kelly alleged that, while claiming £15,000 a year in allowances and having a full-time job, Hogg had a pisspoor attendance record at council meetings. The truth was that, over an eight-year period, Hogg had attended 100 out of a possible 104 meetings. The leaflet said that Hogg had told local people to stop worrying about mobile phone masts, because they were less dangerous than microwaves. Completely untrue – and galling to Hogg because, as an electrical engineer by trade, he knows full well that mobile phone masts emit, er, microwaves. The leaflet went on falsely to allege that Hogg had failed to involve himself in a variety of local issues of concern to his constituents. This piece of black propaganda may well have had an effect, because Hogg lost to Kelly by just 10 votes. He brought a case under Section 106 of the Representation of the People Act, seeking to have the election re-run, in Paisley Sheriff Court. But Labour's lawyers smoothly argued that the Act allowed false statements to made, providing they were "political" and not "personal" – and the Sheriff agreed. Hogg is now talking to m'learned friends in the hope that a libel jury might not take such a relaxed view of such a clear case of defamation.

● **IN THE last *Eye* we said that persecuted publican Geoff Monks had been on the receiving end of a raid by East Northants district council's trading standards department. As any fule kno, district councils don't have trading standards departments. Monks's persecutors on this occasion represented Northamptonshire county council.**

Drug Action Team, Norfolk

The Norfolk Drug Action Team (DAT) is a partnership of agencies working to achieve the strategic and commissioning objectives of the National Drug Strategy and to develop Alcohol Services.

Joint Commissioning Officer

£30,132 - £33,453 per annum

Norfolk County Council advertisement

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

OPTIMISM that academic achievement can only improve in the London borough of Southwark following the departure of failed education provider WS Atkins may yet prove unfounded.

The recently-published SAT results for 14-year-olds confirm that Atkins made a complete balls of running the education service (*Eyes passim*). Southwark children came bottom of the class nationally in maths for the second year running and second from bottom in science and English. Surely the firm chosen to succeed Atkins on an interim basis, Cambridge Education Associates, can only do better?

Let's hope so. But the only authority which had worse results in English than Southwark was Islington … where the education service is run by, er, Cambridge Education Associates.

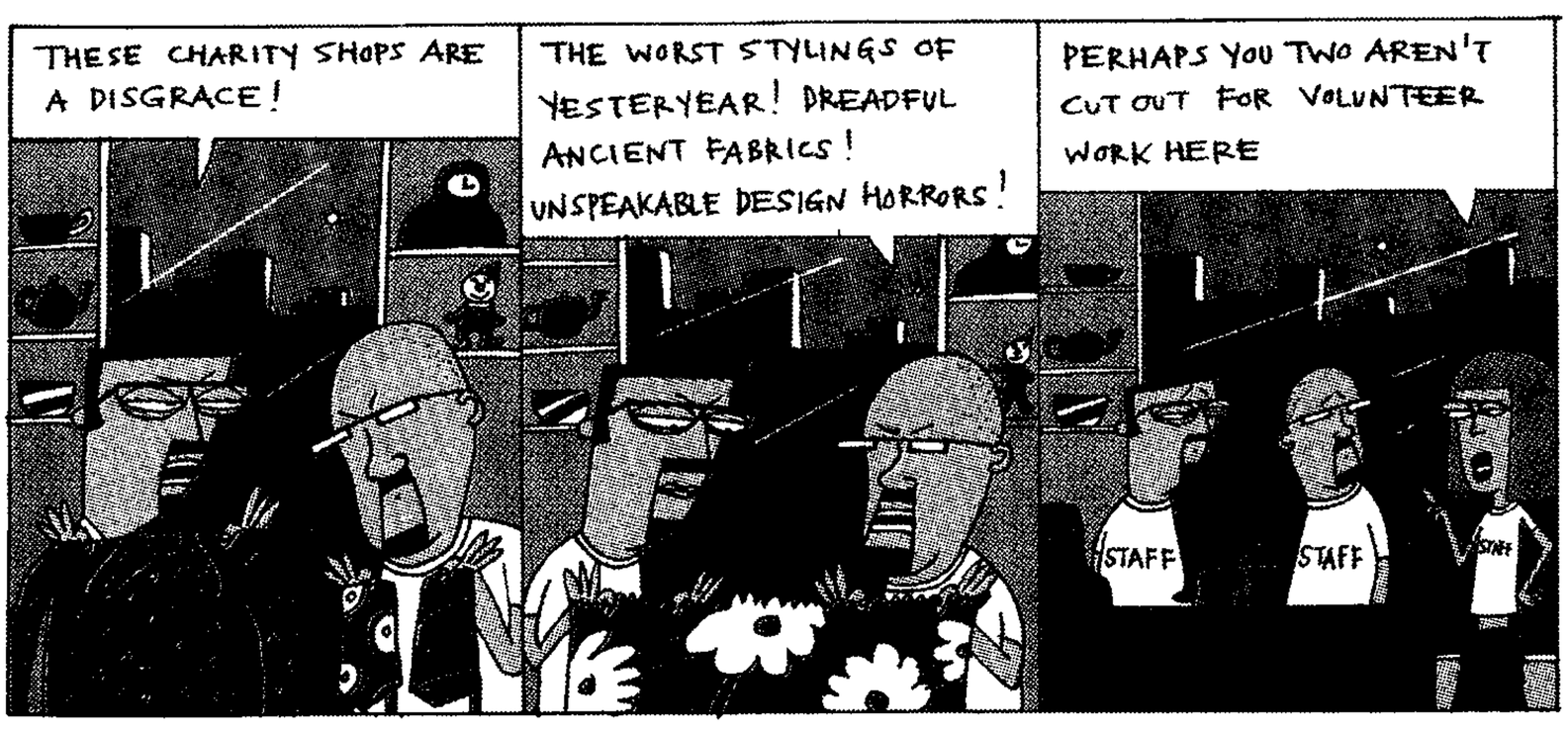
IN BRADFORD they have come up with an ideal solution for the problem of low achievement and the failure of privatised education services to meet their targets – lower the targets!

In January *Eye* 1071 reported that Education Bradford, the privatised service owned by the multinational arms company Serco, had spectacularly failed to meet its targets across a range of indicators including exam results, failing schools and truancy rates. Forty-seven out of 52 targets were missed, with the result that Serco managed to earn just £8,450 out of a possible £870,000 in potential bonuses (on top, that is, of the £36m a year the company is getting to run education in Bradford).

Bradford's hung council has now obligingly agreed to scrap most of its specific targets. So long as Serco manages to narrow the gap between Bradford's woeful performance and national averages, it will get its bonuses. And that's the important thing, after all.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


THESE CHARITY SHOPS ARE A DISGRACE!
THE WORST STYLINGS OF YESTERYEAR! DREADFUL ANCIENT FABRICS! UNSPEAKABLE DESIGN HORRORS!
PERHAPS YOU TWO AREN'T CUT OUT FOR VOLUNTEER WORK HERE
STAFF
STAFF

NOOKS and CORNERS

"CONTINUAL renewal or restoration is an amazing, wonderful and vital part of our world," writes Canon Judy Hunt in the *Chester Cathedral News*; "our creator God is a God of renewal, restoration, recreation, redemption and reconciliation. A God of the 5 'R's."

And this, of course, is why the ancient and venerable Cathedral of Chester needs to be in a state of continual revolution, with redundant and reactionary remnants rejected – in favour of "relevant" rubbish.

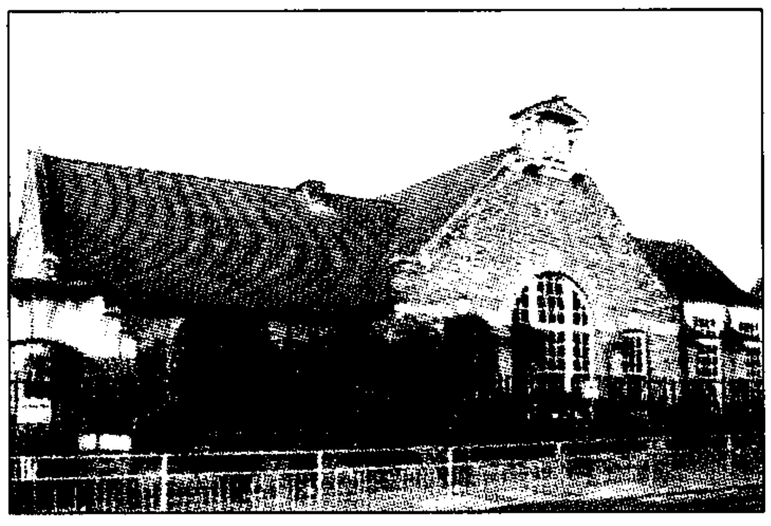
I described the gratuitous replacement of the cathedral's old and irregular floor in *Eye* 911: this was to enable stackable chairs to be used for concerts and other events. Now further alterations are planned. First, the old Sacristy or Vestry to the north of the choir aisle is to be converted into a store room. This vaulted room was originally a chapel and is, in fact, one of the oldest parts of the Cathedral, once entered through a Romanesque arch. Making it into a store room will require building up its ancient, sunken floor level and mutilating the modern oak screen installed in memory of Archdeacon Byrne. But never mind: the Dean and Chapter need somewhere to keep those stackable chairs.

Several of these housekeeping improvements are connected with the building of a new Song School above the Cloisters. In consequence, the old Song School will be used for meetings and as "a 'green room' for concerts, etc". It will also serve as the vestry for the clergy to robe in, so cupboards are needed for the vestments. And someone has come up with the brilliant wheeze of chopping up some redundant choir stalls for this purpose. These happen to be designed 40 years ago by the late GG Pace for the nave of the cathedral. Now Pace's work may not be to everyone's taste, but he was by far the most interesting English church designer of the second half of the 20th century (all right, that's not saying much) and his nave stalls were donated as a memorial. They were carefully designed and well made in oak, incorporating older panels, and have been replaced by much inferior seats around the nave altar.

More to the point, new cupboards would not now be necessary if the Dean and Chapter had not sent off several old wardrobes from the old Canons' Vestry to Sotheby's for auction. These were considered to be surplus to requirements, as were an altar cloth chest, other old chests and pieces of furniture together with the fine ebonised and gilded altar formerly in the nave which was made in 1939 as a memorial to Dean Bennett. Nothing, it would seem, is sacred at Chester.

IN BRITAIN waste is encouraged by a culture of fashion and novelty. The result is skips full of joinery, timber windows and other materials which did not need replacing. The federation of architectural salvage dealers (Salvo) estimates that the plastic window industry encourages the removal of some six million old timber windows a year. Most were made of high quality seasoned pine from North America, an irreplaceable resource, and potentially have centuries of life in them if maintained and painted. The replacement UPVC windows, on the other hand, produce noxious pollutants in their manufacture, have a life measured in decades, at most, and are hideous. The public is conned by this officially sanctioned stupidity.

Here is a typical example. Little Ealing primary school has some 70 original big timber sash windows. Built in 1905 and designed by FH Greenaway and JE Newberry, who were good Edwardian school architects, this handsome brick building dates from a period when high-quality materials could be afforded, so the windows are in good condition and, if properly repaired and maintained, will not need replacing. Nevertheless, Ealing borough council is prepared to ignore expert advice and spend £200,000 of public money on taking them out and fitting new windows. This is largely because the headmaster, one Peter Kellie, an ageing modernist of the 1960s who loves polystyrene ceilings and anything new, is insisting on discarding the old windows. In fact, all they need is careful repair and a coat of paint which would cost much less than half the price of the new aluminium-framed double glazing — guaranteed to have a life of a mere 10 years.



So large sums of public money are being wasted on spoiling a fine building with ugly and unnecessary new windows which will require more public money to replace in the very short-term. The existing windows are integral to the architecture and are, in terms of their quality, literally irreplaceable. This is lunacy: whatever happened to common sense and respect for good craftsmanship?

'Piloti'

I-SPY

Chesil (left) and Ireland (below)

Submitted by Nick Rowland and Scott Latham. £10 paid for similar submissions.

(SAE required for return of photographs.)

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

SOME promenaders at the Albert Hall love to chant laboured jokes in rhythmic unison so everyone can hear, including radio listeners.

Which is why the BBC, which broadcasts the Proms throughout the world, was alarmed earlier this month by the prospect of a programme that brought together the much-loved percussionist Evelyn Glennie with the not-much-loved (except, apparently, by Ms Glennie) conductor Leonard Slatkin.

Slatkin has been a problem throughout his appointment as chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, as this column has had occasion to note before. Accident-prone in dealings with the press, unpopular with his players (who consider him lightweight), and unhappy with the job, he was barely settled into it before he announced that he would not be renewing his contract; and he is now effectively marking time until he leaves.

But as chief of the BBCSO he is also *de facto* chief of the Proms, which has left the Beeb in an awkward position. And they've dealt with it by all by drawing a veil over Slatkin's presence. In the 150 pages of the *Proms Guide* he gets barely a mention while other conductors (Norrington, Rattle, even Bobby McFerrin) are featured at length. And he was pointedly not booked for his own orchestra's high-profile Royal Prom a few weeks ago: instead, the BBC brought back his predecessor, Andrew Davis.

Sadly for the Beeb, their policy of going quiet on Slatkin fell apart when a tabloid newspaper revealed that he had enjoyed a passionate affair with Glennie: a cherishable prospect given the disparity between their ages (he's 58, she's 38) and all the funnier for having been conducted by email and in excruciating hi-tech metaphors – "The thought of my modem inside your laptop turns my mainframe on," he wrote, and, "Will we have to be on-line to make love? I'll nibble on your bits and byte." Oh dear.

At the time it was said that the emails had been supplied to the paper by Ms Glennie's ex-husband, as an act of revenge. But it's now widely believed that naughty members of the BBCSO may well have been involved.

Poor Leonard: it was all so horribly embarrassing that he was finally persuaded at the eleventh hour to withdraw from conducting the Glennie concert; "for personal reasons" said the diplomatically vague explanation in the programme book. And it's not finished yet. There's still the dreaded *Last Night* (which he can't with any dignity pull out of) for the promenaders to perfect their lap-top jokes.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Hensher slagged off Tracey, now she's suing because he's accused her of stalking him—he's been sent loads of incontinence pads and grotesque china figurines.
ART FEUD OF THE YEAR
EMIN V. HENSHER
Young British Artist takes on Young British Writer
Sounds like an interesting installation to me...
It does rather point the finger, doesn't it?

8.0 **Grand Slam** (T) Carol Vorderman and James Richardson are joined by more talented contestants. *8984*

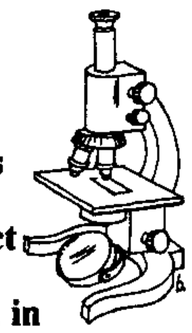
Grauniad Guide

Number crunchings

£300m
■ amount National Grid invests annually on repairs and modernisation of electricity

£300m
■ amount National Grid is investing in building electricity connection between Tasmania and Australian mainland

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



BERNARD FOING of the European Space Agency (ESA) has been talking about colonies on the Moon within 20 years. He is project leader of ESA's Smart One Lunar probe, which is due to be launched in early September and will take some 16 months to get to its target. The trouble is, lunar colonies by 2023 are as likely as finding deposits of Brie and Roquefort in the Sea of Tranquillity.

The report last week into the Columbia Space Shuttle tragedy catalogued a series of errors caused by weak and complacent management in Nasa. But, possibly more importantly, the accident also raised a question mark over the whole *raison d'etre* of the Space Shuttle and, indeed, Nasa's whole manned spaceflight programme. The Shuttles were designed as a cheap, reliable and efficient way to get men and *materiel* into orbit. In fact, they are none of these things. The Shuttle's finest hour was carrying the team into space that repaired the Hubble Telescope 10 years ago. But Hubble is nearing the end of its life, and soon the shuttles, if they fly again, will perform only one real function – to service and ferry astronauts to and from the International Space Station (ISS). And the primary function of the ISS? To act as a destination for the Shuttle and to keep Nasa's astronaut corps in business.

For nearly 31 years, since the last man walked on the Moon, space exploration – as opposed to simply going into space for its own sake – has been a fantasy rather than a reality. Even if America, the Europeans and the Russians were to pool their resources and had access to unlimited funds (which they won't, and they don't, and never will have), it is improbable that lunar colonies could be built in Dr Foing's timescale. If space agency chiefs are to enthuse a sceptical public about humans-in-space, they had better find somewhere more interesting to go, and something more interesting to do, than growing seedlings in zero-G, running on treadmills and taking pretty photos from low Earth orbit.

"Don't follow me in here, Dad – pubs aren't a suitable place for blokes"

Letters

Private Eye

Vallely interesting

Sir,

If I am biased towards Andrew Gilligan this is not, as you suggest, because my wife is a colleague of Gilligan's on the Today programme. She does not work on Today, nor even for the BBC news and current affairs department, and has never met or spoken to Gilligan. (She edits Thought for the Day, which is produced by BBC Religion, entirely independently, in Manchester not London, and merely happens to be broadcast during Today).

Sadly the reason I am better disposed to Gilligan than to the government is that his faults are small by comparison. His report – that we were taken into war on what has proved a shaky premise – was right in all its essentials, as subsequent events have proved. By contrast the New Labour spin machine has a history of sly duplicity so long it could fill your entire letters column.

PAUL VALLELY,

The Independent.

A Correction

Sir,

I did not make any "racist remarks" (HP Sauce, 1087) in my speech on rural housing problems during Eisteddfod week, and I ask you to retract such a slur. I have a long record of campaigning against racism and oppression of minorities; I was an active member of Wales Anti-Apartheid, I have spoken at rallies against the inhuman treatment of the Kurdish people in Turkey, and I have shared platforms with my Pakistani friends in the Arfon area against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – both of which were immoral and inappropriate reactions to the tragedy of September 11th.

What is beyond doubt is that all rural areas are now suffering from low wages and escalating house prices. The main reason for this escalation is the growing demand from people from the main urban conurbations. To add to the problem, we have a growing number who openly admit to moving to the country to avoid other ethnic minorities. I condemned such racism, and it makes our task of keeping the Welsh language culture more difficult if such intolerance prevails.

We must learn to appreciate different traditions and cultures – and that includes Welsh culture. I abhor racism in all its forms, but my condemnation of racist attitudes was deliberately misinterpreted by Labour in an attempt to smear my name. I'm surprised you fell for such a trap.

Yn gywir,
DAFYDD IWAN,

Caernarfon, Gwynedd.

Sir,

The dismissal of Mr Iwan's comments as "racist" was particularly lazy. Should you ever read his full speech (made in Welsh), rather than the parts selectively picked out and translated out of context by his opponents, you would quickly realise that they were nothing of the sort; the total opposite in fact. He did not accuse all migrants to Wales of being racists; merely that some of them are, while pointing out the hypocrisy of whinging about foreigners moving to England while simultaneously doing the same thing to Wales.

Yours,
DYLAN LLYR,

Caernarfon, Gwynedd.

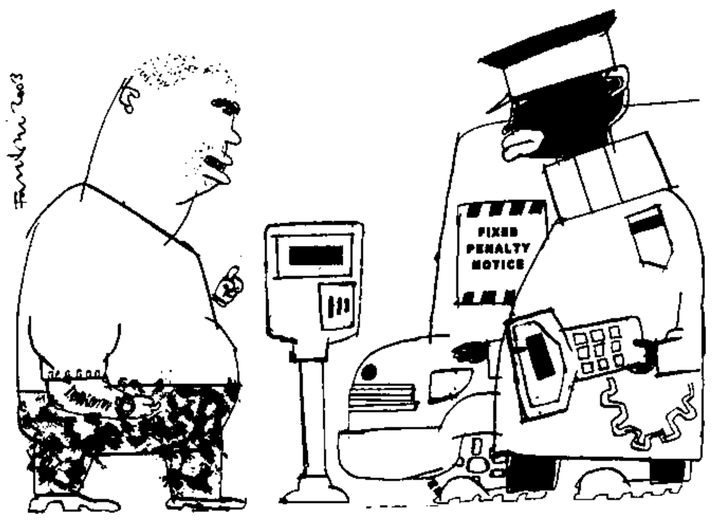
Southmead Hospital

Support to Stop Smoking Midwife – Grade G

30 hours per week worked over 4 days

North Bristol NHS Trust

Scenes You Seldom See



"Dead right, mate... five minutes over is still an offence... let's face it, it's my own fault and, after all, you are only doing your job"

Voice of yoof

Sir,

For how much longer will Private Eye be fuelling the idea that A Levels today are worthless (cover, Eye 1087)? It is hardly surprising that each generation does better than the previous one: it's called evolution, so get used to it. Where would we be if each generation were forced to start from scratch?

*There is a simple natural cycle, where one generation grows, learns, and then teaches the next generation. Every other generation in history has accepted that their children will be smarter than they are and are proud of their children's success. Not the current generation of 30-60 year olds. Perhaps it is a result of your history, growing up in an era of ruthless competitiveness, that you simply cannot accept the idea that **anyone**, even your own children, might be better than you are. Well we are. The exams aren't getting easier – you're getting old. Can't you just accept the fact that you have taught us well and be happy?*

Yours hoping this annoyed rambling makes sense,

JAMES LE GRYS,

Rochester, Kent.

No nukes is bad news

Sir,

So A.J. Warren wants to hear how nuclear power and global warming are bad things. Yes, I quite agree, who wants to hear both sides of an argument?

Nuclear power stations are expensive to build and dismantle, and do produce radioactive waste. But fossil fuels will eventually be exhausted and the alternatives (wind, wave, solar, geothermal, etc) aren't currently able to fill the gap. Therefore, heresy it might sound, but nuclear power must at least be considered.

As to climate change, and I know that I'm being naive here, but shouldn't scientists examine data and then draw conclusions? Getting funding to prove or disprove climate change sounds unscientific. The fact that we are currently living in an ice-age (permanent polar ice caps) suggests that we are not living in a period of unprecedented global warmth. Climate change models are inaccurate. If the Met Office cannot guarantee a forecast a week in advance, what chance does a global forecast have of predicting 50 years into the future?

BTW, I don't know Boffin's credentials for commenting on either nuclear power or global warming, but I do know mine. I'm an environmental engineer.

Yours, hoping that I don't start an ugly slanging match,
MARTIN BURKE,

Via email.

Scouse clearance sale

Sir,

Pay no heed to Cllr Mike Storey (Letters, 1087) in his attempt to blunder through 60 years of his music lending library's policy of what and what not to put on the public shelves in Liverpool.

My shelves are now full of his music library, and very mainstream it is too, some of it. Losses include such unknown composers as Prokofiev: I have the leather-backed copy of his Second Piano Concerto in my house, so any borrower in Liverpool will have to contact me to see it. Sold to the dealer for £1: sold to me for £12 or thereabouts. Where does that leave the ratepayers?

My information is that the dealer I contacted was just invited by the clueless library staff to go down into the stack rooms and pick anything and everything off the shelves for a pound a throw. It seems that the staff had no idea of the quality of what they were letting go. It was more or less "books by the yard", and the same thing is going on all over this country in other local authority areas.

And Mr Storey should realise that what people want and do not want to borrow is more a product of the focus of their education in the City of Culture over those 60 years, than whether what the music librarians relegated to the cellar was indeed unworthy of retention.

"Best wishes" at the end of Mr Storey's letter is so far inadequate as to be laughable; rather like "we've sold your music off, so have a nice day".

MICHAEL J.A. BROUGH,

London SW1.

Sir,

Cllr Storey had evidently not read the report (in issue 1083) which inspired my earlier letter.

The sale of rare material formerly in Liverpool Central Library's music department is, unfortunately, well-attested. I attended one of the library sales at which some of this material was sold. The matter has been reported in the national press and on BBC Radio 4. I understand that these reports started when someone came across a large quantity of such material for sale in a bookshop a long way from Liverpool. Apparently these items, which the leader of our city council implies were "not wanted" by Liverpool people, were in demand by paying customers elsewhere.

Yours faithfully,
FLORENCE GERSTEN,

Wavertree, Liverpool.

Lookalike

Beckham

Baboon

Sir,

Mr Beckham's latest hairstyle is said to be new, but among the Gelada baboons of Ethiopia it would be regarded as old hat.

Yours sincerely,
WILLIAM CROWTHER,

Chittoe, Wilts.

The dik-dik is so named because when frightened it emits a whistling cry which sounds like zik-zik.

Sunday Times

"Ruined anywhere nice this year?"

Exterminate

Sir,

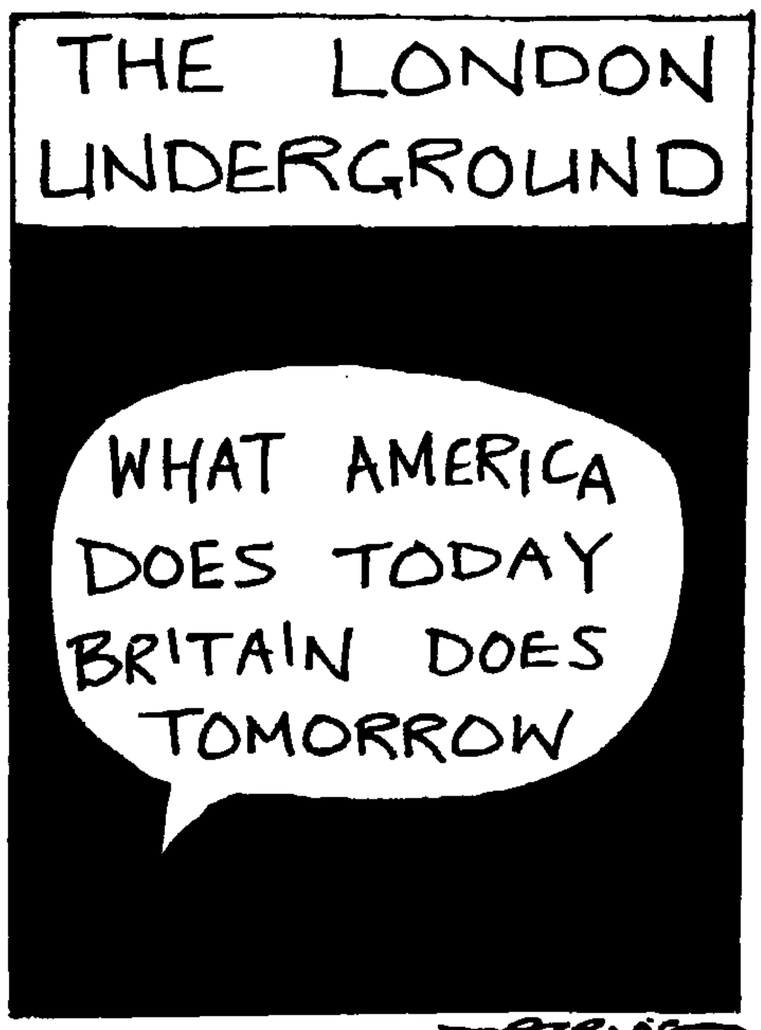
Doubtless many other pedants pointed this out, but in Crossword 242, clue 4 down, a Dalek is NOT a robot.

Davros genetically tinkered with the Kaled race, accelerating the evolutionary process until the ultimate lifeform was reached. Whilst this was a survivor with massive processing ability, it was physically weak, so a travel case was designed. The creature is organic, not Robotic.

Bung on an eye stalk, a gun and a sink plunger, you have a "Dalek" as known by most people. (The name evolved too, Kaled to Dalek geddit?)

Yours, increasingly pedantically,
DAVID T. COULTER,

Luton, Beds.



LUVVIES

'Sarah revealed that you will see Daphne go through a personal journey during the film. "I think the first story revolved around Daphne finding her place, that same in-between place that I think a lot of teenagers and young adults find themselves in, which is: Where do I fit in?"'

SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR
on her role in Scooby Doo 2
Sci-Fi.com

Submitted by Strobes.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Grilled Trout

Sir,

It is good to see Old Trout ("Down on the Fish Farm", Eye 1087) splashing about in his puddle again.

First he gloats at job losses and business collapses in areas yet to feel the benefit of the service-based economy – cheers to you, pal – and then he cherrypicks the Technetium contamination scare, completely missing the point in his desperation for an ankle to bite.

If theoretical quantities of radioactive contamination are present in farmed Atlantic salmon then it is likely that all fish in these waters are similarly contaminated.

And, as with the issue of PCBs etc, he makes the cheapest jibe of all. Surely the object of opprobrium – assuming one is strictly necessary in objective scientific discourse – should be the source of the contamination rather than victim?

Incidentally, a cargo vessel, the Jambo, recently ran aground in the Summer Isles on Scotland's north-west coast, carrying large amounts of fuel oil and a cargo of zinc sulphide. It is still there and progress is slow to say the least. This in an area of outstanding natural beauty and enormous environmental importance. Hardly a mention in the press – it's so far from London after all – and diddly squat in your organ. The main threats to the marine environment are there for all to see, yet all the Eye seems to be concerned with is helping a vendetta against ordinary working people in remote areas generally suffering from economic meltdown.

As any fule no, old trout turn ferox, ie they start eating each other.

Yours aye,
MARTIN MORRISON,

Stoer, Sutherland.

Sir,

I have just returned from three weeks on Kodiak Island, Alaska, which is the biggest salmon fishery in the USA. Their anticipated season catch of all species of salmon will be 150 million-plus, however their trade is being decimated by Japanese fish farms based in Chile. They are only receiving six or seven cents a pound when landed.

The Japanese have discovered that Pacific salmon do not thrive in fish farms and have started importing Atlantic salmon which is already riddled with ISA and other diseases. These diseases will ultimately find their way into the clean Pacific stock.

Is it not time for the WHO and/or UN to step in and stop fish farming as a health hazard to the world's people?

Yours faithfully,
PETER WALMSLEY,

Preston, Lancs.

Sir,

Whoever wrote this is definitely the weakest link this time, if only for his/her abysmal lack of knowledge of geography or politics.

Of course, as everyone else knows, the nation state of Czechoslovakia ceased to exist over 10 years ago, on 1 January 1993, when it was succeeded by the present day nation states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Moreover these, along with Poland, are among the 10 countries which on 1 January 2004 will become full EU member states. Thus from then on the peoples of all those states, as with those of the present EU member states – Britain included, don't let's forget – will have the right to work anywhere in the EU – that is, without the need for work permits or any other bumf.

Isn't it just typical of the racist, xenophobic UK Immigration Service that they should take such disproportionate action in relation to the workers at Kyle of Lochalsh at this stage in the proceedings – simply, of course, in order to justified their continued wretched existence.

Best wishes,
TIM HALL,

Via email.

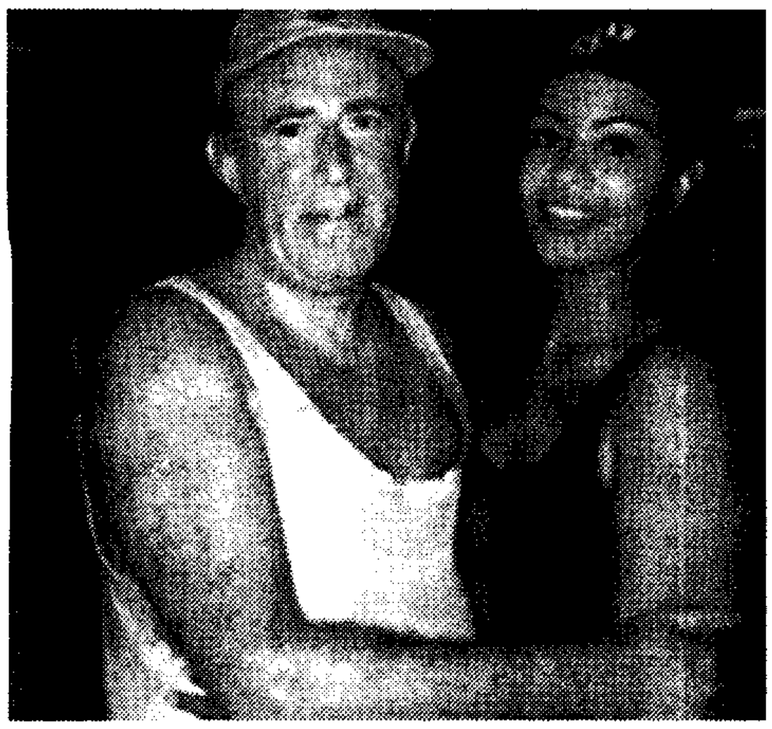
Hutton stuff, baby!

Sir,

It was very uplifting to see Bliar pictured in his droopy vest alongside a suntanned lovely during his recent Caribbean break. Perhaps Lord Gnome has a picture in his vast collection featuring other very important people in droopy vests, maybe even with suntanned beauties included. I know it would cheer us all up during these dark days.

Regards,
PETER KELLY,

Via email.



Load of balls

Sir,

Mr Simon Whitlow is mistaken. "Nauta" is one of a small number of nouns ("agricola" is another) which, though masculine, decline like feminine adjectives. While a good slave is "servus bonus" if male, "serva bona" if female, a good sailor/farmer is "nauta/agricola bonus".

Mr Whitlow is also wrong about "penis". This word, from the same stem as pendulum, originally meant "tail" but had acquired its modern meaning by the year dot. (Cicero wrote "Caudam antiqui penem vocabant.") It is masculine.

Yours faithfully,
PHILIP ROE,

Via email.

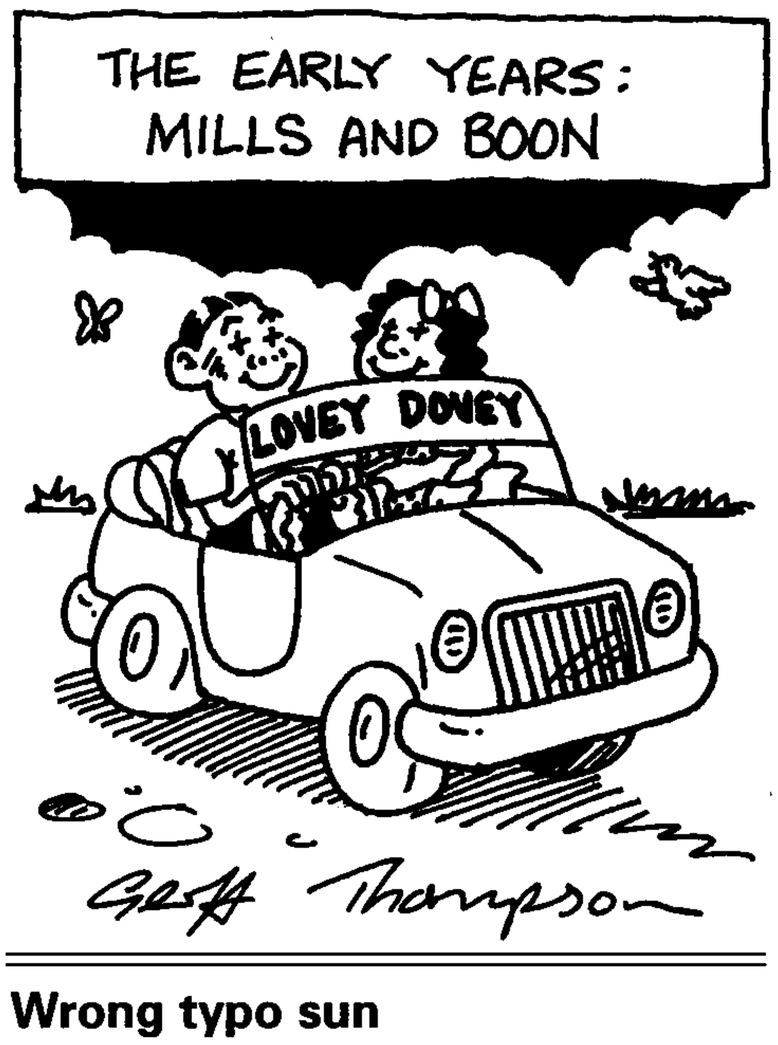
Sir,

The correspondence re bollocarum is in error. In Roman times a witness placed his hands over the private parts (known as testicula) and he then took the oath to effect if he told porkies the testicula would be cut off. We still use derivations of that word in Court today when one testifies etc. but I do not suppose that many witnesses know the significance.

Yours,
D.G. FLETCHER ROGERS,

Via email.

● *Thanks for the dozens of letters from readers on this point. Ed.*



Wrong typo sun

Sir,

*You were kind enough to print my letter "Sun spot" prominently in No. 1087, and the cuts made were exactly the right ones to keep the main point and not have it wandering off into background stuff. So it was unfortunate that the typo "solar **in**activity" crept into line 2. I see that my disk does have "activity".*

The error makes the letter look a bit vague, and could detract from the serious point it is trying to make.

Yours sincerely,
ROBIN OAKLEY-HILL,

Sevenoaks, Kent.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

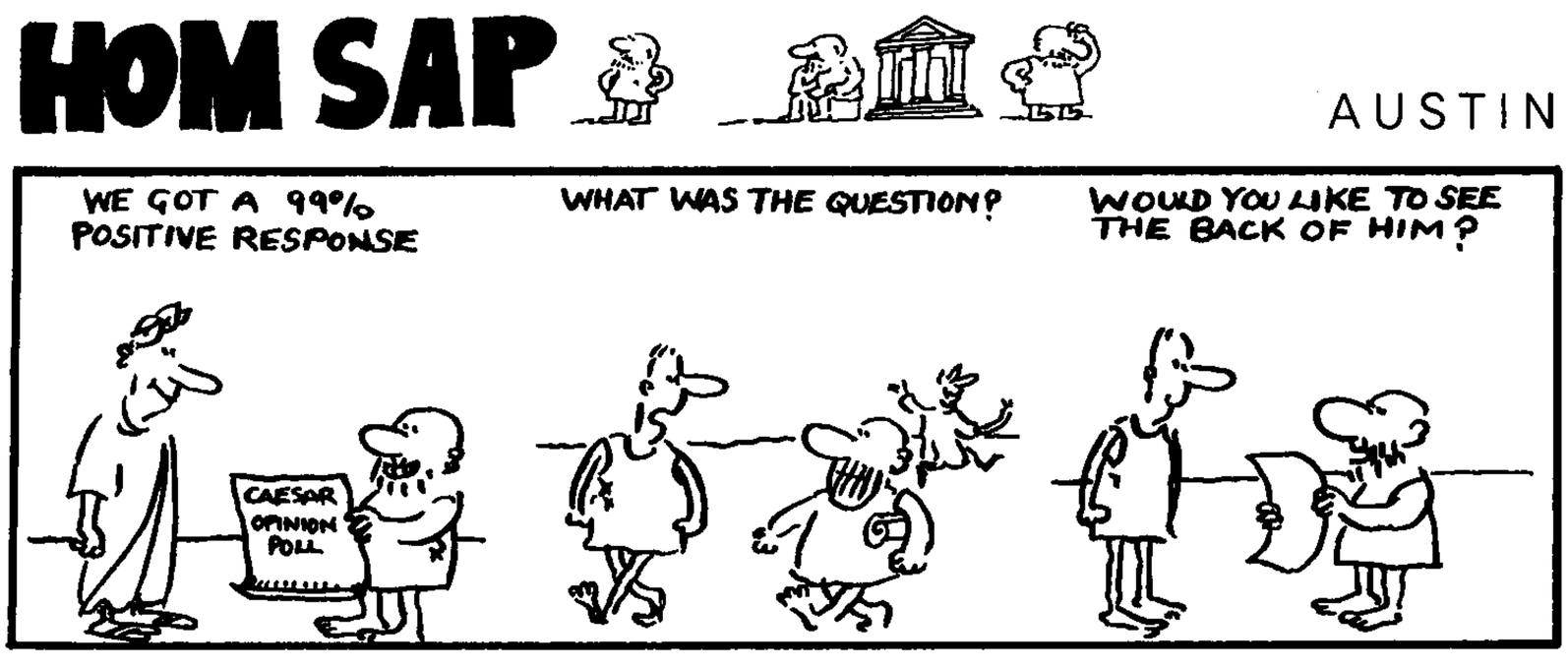
"I would die tomorrow if I could have five more years playing cricket for Yorkshire and England."
GEOFF BOYCOTT, Channel 4
("broadfootron")

"The last rites are on the wall..."
ALAN DONALD, Radio 4
(Jane Teather)

"[Southampton] have forced them [Manchester United] into a lot of unforced errors."
STEVE CLARIDGE, Radio 5 Live
(Dave Thorpe)

"That's another nail in his afternoon."
MARK BLUNDELL, ITV1
(Tony Eastwood)

"At this stage of the race being in front is a double-edged coin."
Commentator, BBC2
(Paul Merry)


HOM SAP
AUSTIN
WE GOT A 99% POSITIVE RESPONSE
CAESAR OPINION POLL
WHAT WAS THE QUESTION?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE BACK OF HIM?

Letter from the United Arab Emirates

from Our Own Correspondent

OUR esteemed poet-president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, has just celebrated 37 years of rule to cries of "Listen to Zayed and awaken!" He came to power in the swinging Sixties in a British-backed coup. Zayed needed your backing to oust Sheikh Shakbut, his elder brother, who was suspicious of this new-fangled oil business.

The Emirates still like the Brits, especially your weapons industry. Last September your arms minister Lord Bach came over – one of three visits by MoD ministers since 2001.

You really must be careful what you sell us, though, as it doesn't always stay in the country. The French recently stopped one of their firms selling 28 remote nuclear manipulators to a Dubai company which was probably a front for Iran's nuclear programme.

Life here is delightfully simple, unencumbered as we are by elections, trade unions or any of that democratic paraphernalia. This is reassuring for the 26,000 delegates at the World Bank-IMF meeting we are hosting this month, who will not face annoying protesters.

Our Emirates remain calm in the otherwise troubled Gulf, mostly because we have a very small number of people and a very large amount of oil. Sprinkling round the resulting wealth contains most arguments.

We do still have our problems: we worry about unemployment as indolent Emirates youth lie around and let the Palestinians, Pakistanis. Indians and Filipinos – who outnumber locals by three to one – do all the work. Brits and other white expats give us some bother, but we try to deport such undesirables, rather than behead or imprison them.

After 11 September we rounded up some riff-raff and sacked a few hot-headed teachers, but nothing too draconian. And there are longstanding internal tensions between the dynasties of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, which dominate our federation. Abu Dhabi relies on oil while Dubai lives off trade – especially with Iran, which exacerbates these strains.

However, even the calmest seas can throw up a storm: the frail 86-year-old Zayed frequently travels to the States for operations (however good our oil-funded health service is, he still deserves better). Will accession be smooth on his death?

A warning came from Ras al-Khaimah, our northern, oil-free emirate, this June. The Emir sacked his eldest son Sheikh Khalid from his job as Crown Prince. Because of the Emir's ill health, Khalid has ruled the emirate for four years. However, Khalid is viewed as a moderniser – his wife Fawqai set up a Ladies Club to help women with problems. Not only is she educated, but she is also a playwright – all making her a dangerous feminist in the eyes of the ruling elite. The Emir reportedly demanded Sheikh Khalid break up the Ladies Club and banish his wife. Khalid also led a peace demonstration against the war on Iraq; the UAE's official position was support for the allies.

Thousands of protesters and a convoy of cars headed for the Emir's palace demanding his reinstatement. Troops dispersed the demonstrators with machine gun fire over their heads and the bringing forward of water cannon. The next day tanks were sent by the UAE's federal army to bolster the Emir's decision.

Khalid suggested the Emir had gone bonkers, and fled to Oman. He's back now and all seems forgiven – but this two-day wonder shows that even the stable Emirates can wobble.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● United States Patent 6,485,773. Semen taste-enhancement dietary supplement. This invention regards a dietary supplement formulation that significantly improves the taste of the male ejaculate. While certain ingredients have previously been believed in 'urban-myth' fashion to improve semen taste, there has never been a precedent for any formulation developed or marketed for this purpose.

Almost a year of market testing was conducted prior to establishing the most effective formulation and concentration of specific ingredients to produce the optimal results ultimately achieved. These optimal results were discovered only after experimenting with certain freeze-dried fruit and vegetable powders combined with specific spices and monosodium glutamate, that when ingested by the male result in a significant improvement to the taste of the male ejaculate by reducing its generally salty and/or bitter taste while also adding a perfectly pleasant flavour. Research showed that 98.5% of all customers considered the taste to be "very enjoyable." During the research and development phase of this invention, it was discovered that pineapple juice, paw-paw, and broccoli were only slightly effective in improving semen taste, regardless of how much was ingested. As a result, powder concentrates of both ingredients were tested, with only slightly better results. Finally, freeze-dried forms of these same ingredients were tried with significantly improved results. As certain other fruits and vegetables were also somewhat effective in improving taste results, banana and celery were also ultimately selected and added to the formulation. Further research discovered that three specific spices (ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg) were successful in neutralising the generally salty/bitter taste, and were added to the invention formulation. *(United States Patent Office, 26/11/02. Spotter: George Sassoon)*

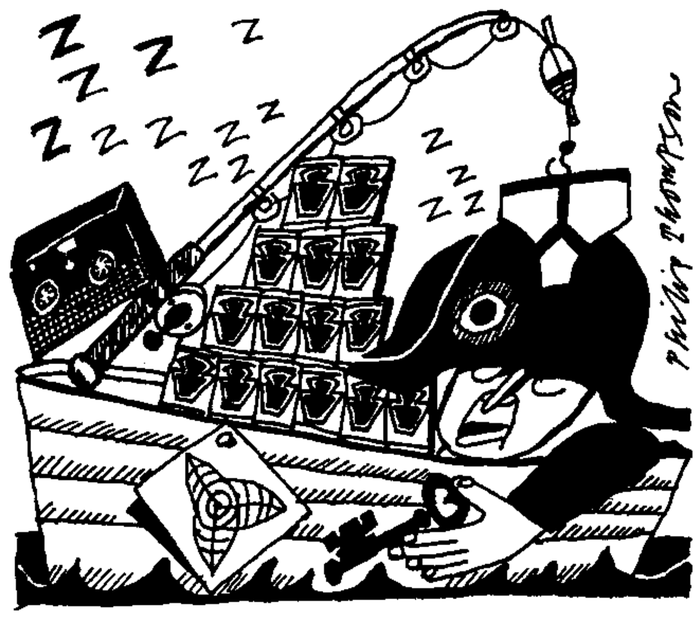
— ● —

● *"Mr Sandhu's actions were unwise," firefighter John Sale told reporters at Wednesbury fire station, "and should not be imitated by others. We would strongly advise against anyone trying to get rid of a wasps' nest in this way. It is much simpler just to ring the council." Earlier, Mr Sale had described how Kulvinder Sandhu had accidentally set fire to his own home in Milton Street, Walsall. "He spotted the football-sized nest in a roof space in his house, but instead of calling the council to deal with the problem, he decided to get rid of the wasps himself. Unfortunately, the way he decided to do this was by igniting the spray from an aerosol can, and trying to turn it into a flamethrower.*

"Instead of setting fire to the nest, he set fire to the roof timbers, which only succeeded in making the wasps very angry. And his actions also made us angry, because as well as having to put out his blazing roof, we had to deal with a swarm of furious wasps." (Express & Star [Walsall], 30/7/03. Spotter: Ben Hurst)

— ● —

● "I have done something that not even Napoleon could do," Willem Merk told reporters in Amsterdam. "I escaped from Saint Helena. I was sentenced to fifteen years in the island prison after being found guilty of smuggling $20 million of hash, but I was determined to get free. So I made copies of the guard's keys by pressing them into bars of soap, like I once saw Steve McQueen do in a



film, then left a cassette tape of myself snoring in my cell, and escaped one night. I'd already paid a friendly islander $150 to make me a boat out of driftwood, and I set sail with fifteen cans of beans, a fishing rod, a change of underpants, and a page torn from an atlas. I floated for two months, without knowing where I was going, because I didn't have a compass or a radio. But eventually I drifted 2,000 miles to the Brazilian coast, where I managed to contact the Dutch embassy, who repatriated me to Holland. I'm now a free man, and very soon, I intend to be a free stoned man." *(St Helena Herald, 18/7/03. Spotter: Moss Scott)*

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

LORD ATTENBOROUGH

Now, at the age of 80, you are the greatest living British actor and director– have spoons played any part in your long and distinguished professional life?

I belong to a generation which put a value on important things like spoons. We worked hard for our spoons, and when we'd got them we appreciated them. And we tried to make sure that everyone else had their fair share of spoons as well. Spoons for all. That's what we believed in. Not very fashionable now, is it?

The greatest of all your great films, I suppose, must be *Gandhi*...

...I'm not sure that I would agree with that, love. Some of the others were pretty good, you know...

...spoons, please, Lord Richard! Did the Mahatma have a view on spoons...

It's interesting you should ask that. When we were filming in Uttar Rubbesh, we actually visited the little hut where Gandhi had his spinning wheel. It was very moving. He lived such a simple life. I don't think spoons would have played much part in it. Though I am sure Ben could have handled any scene with a spoon beautifully. We were so lucky to have him.

Did spoons play a part in any of your other great films?

Oh yes. If you think of *A Spoon Too Far, Spoonlands, Brighton Spoons*, I think you'll see that there's been a connecting thread in all my work.

But in more recent times, your name has become synonymous with the British spoon industry, particularily your work for the BSI (the British Spoon Institute)...

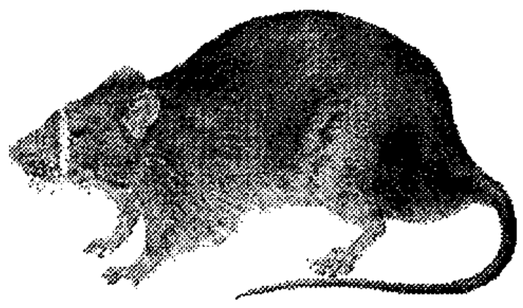
I was very fortunate to be invited by the Culture Secretary to chair a committee looking into the whole future of British spoons. It was a very humbling experience, to find out how much hard work so many talented people were putting in to try and put British spoons where they belong – at the very forefront of world spoonery. We have a lot of brilliant young spoonmakers in this country, many of them from the disabled and ethnic communities. Last year I was deeply honoured to be invited to open the new wing of the British Spoon Museum in Solihull, which they've called the Attenborough Wing. It was very humbling and very moving and I can honestly say that it brought a lump to my throat and more than one tear to my eye *(starts to weep uncontrollably)*.

I suppose now would not be a good time to ask you whether anything amusing had ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

Boo, hoo, hoo.

NEXT WEEK: Lord Falconer – *"Me and My Falconer."*

RAT TO LEAVE SINKING SHIP



by Our Shipping Staff
Joshua Rodentberg

A RAT today announced that he was leaving the sinking ship to spend more time with some other rats.

"I have been thinking of leaving the ship for a long time and I have discussed it at length with the captain." said the rat. "The fact that the ship is going down has not influenced my decision at all."

Alastair Campbell

In a letter to the captain the rat says, "It has been a privilege to be on this ship for all these years and to serve you in my capacity as a rat."

The captain in turn thanked the rat for his loyal service and described him as "a great friend, a great colleague and a great rat."

Alastair Campbell

Rat experts were quick to praise the rat's contribution to the sinking of the ship *(Surely "successful voyage of the vessel"? Ed.)* Said Roy Greentail, "I used to work with the rat in the old days in the gutter. He was a good rat to have on your side. He was rough, tough, with a thick skin and a long dirty tale which no-one believed."

Alastair Campbell

Another former colleague remembers the rat from their days on board Captain Bob's ill-fated vessel.

"He was a prize example of vermin. I once got into a scrap with him when he turned nasty and bit me on the nose. He was responsible for the Black Death and the Plague but apart from that he was a decent, honest, straightforward sort of rat."

The rat pledged his loyalty to the captain saying he would be available for consultancy "but only from the safety of the shore."

BAGHDAD TIMES

Friday September 5 2003

POST-WAR CHAOS

Power Failures Continue

by Our Man In London **Sir John Keegan**

THE CAPITAL city of this once-proud country was plunged into hours of terrifying darkness as a result of the authorities' failure to maintain electricity supplies.

Frightened Londoners were trapped in nightmare conditions as lights went out, trains ground to a halt and hospitals were forced to resort to emergency generators.

Millions of civilians staggered around in the dark, not knowing when the lights would come on again.

"The irony," said one furious Londoner, "is that this country has all that North Sea oil, yet we can't get the lights to come on so that we can eat our tea."

NO SHOCK
(because electricity was off)

He continued, "Mr Bush's man, who is supposed to be in charge here, is failing utterly in his job."

Meanwhile, extremists have taken advantage of the chaotic conditions for their own political advantage.

The self-styled leader of Britain's three million newt-lovers, Ayatollah Red Ken, has urged people to protest: "Once again, we see a lack of investment in the infrastructure of our public services," he screamed.

"Imagine the situation if this had happened during the heatwave – millions would have died. It is time to get rid of Blair and appoint a Prime Minister who has the support of local people, such as myself."

TIMES PAST — THE TIMES — FUTURE

The Prime Minister's Historic Evidence

The appearance of Mr Blair at the Hutton Inquiry last week banished any lingering doubts about his conduct in the unfortunate death of Dr Kelly at the hands of the BBC.

His statesmanlike performance... supremely confident... mastery of facts... critics rebuffed... on top of his brief... extremely professional... sober delivery... absence of spin... contrast to BBC chairman... shifty demeanour... weasel words... silly beard... born liar if ever we saw one... licence-payers' money... time to close down the BBC... watch Sky TV... hoorah for Mr Murdoch.

© The Sun.

ON OTHER PAGES 'It's all going well in Iraq' writes Tim Hamas 2 'Bush will be re-elected by a landslide' writes Michael Gofer 3 'My daughter says politics is like the dodgems' by Mary Ann Bighead *(as seen on TV)*.

School news

St Cakes

Cake term begins today. There are 375 overweight boys and 25 really fat girls in the school. W.W. Bunter (Gilligans) is Head of Tuck. Spare-tyre (Fatsoes) is Keeper of the Lard. Miss K.F.C. Family-Bucket is Senior Tubby. The Dining Hall has been replaced by a new branch of McDonald's which will be opened by the Rt. Hon. Nicholas Soames (O.C.) on Nov. 7th. PE Teacher Mr M. Tracksuit has been replaced by Mr Couch-Potato who has a degree in Video Game Management and Television Studies. The Founders' Race has been cancelled as all the boys are too fat to run. The production of "Salad Days" has been postponed. Instead there will be a performance of Arnold Wesker's "Chips With Everything!" which will take place on Dec. 3rd in the Cyril Smith Memorial Hall. Tickets from the Bursar, Major A.N. Mosley, The Bunker, Friedrichstrasse, Berlin. Pies will be eaten on St Ethelburger-and-fries Day. Coronaries will be on Dec 21st.

MODERN ROMANCE

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Charles Bronson

So. Farewell
Then
Charles Bronson.

Yes, you were
One of "The
Magnificent Seven".

Now, following
The deaths of Yul
Brynner, James
Coburn, Horst
Buchholtz, Steve
McQueen and the
Other one

There is only Robert
Vaughn left.

"The Magnificent One"
As he will
Now be known.

All together now –

Dum. Di-da-da-dum
Dum. Di-da-da-dum

Da-da
Di-da-DA-da...

E.J. Thribb (aged 17½)

PS: Any chance of the
BBC putting it on again this
week?

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Vale Cum Gratia!

As you may have all heard by now, the most important man in the parish has resigned. Not the Vicar, stupid! but Alastair Campbell who, since the very beginning, has edited this newsletter and been involved in every major decision of parish policy.

He is quite literally irreplaceable and it is hard to imagine the mess that this parish would be in had not Mr Campbell been there to sort everything out.

And let me say at once that Mr Campbell was in no way compromised by the sad recent events that Mr Hutton is looking into following the unfortunate death of Dr Mitty.

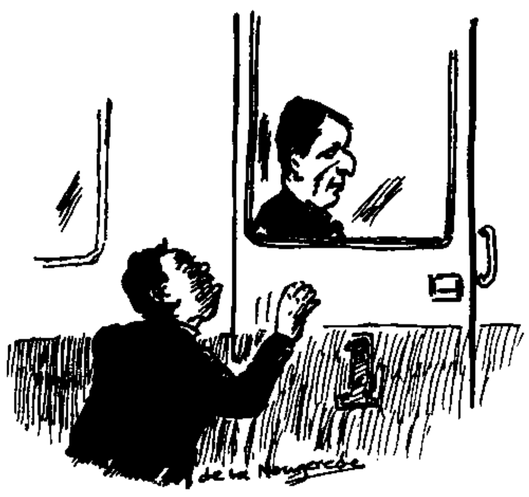
His departure has nothing to do with that and anyone who says differently had better watch themselves in the unlit alley that runs along the NCP car park to the bus station (known locally as Campbell Alley due to all the unfortunate mouthy parishioners who have found their legs broken in it, including that fat scumbag Gilligan).

Mr Campbell has, for some time, considered that he needed to spend more time with his wonderful partner and delightful children whom he has seen very rarely in the past due to having to rescue the stupid vicar and his gormless wife from the clutches of that evil Caplin witch and her mad mother. He was not pushed, okay? He decided to go because he felt he had achieved all he could and he's got other things to do actually.

We would like to thank Alastair from the bottom of our hearts for his truly unforgettable and invaluable contribution to parish life.

We will never see his like again. *Sign this, Vicar, and I'll put it in the magazine.*

Tony



Local artist Mr De la Nougerede's touching portrait of Mr Campbell's departure

Hullo!

Hey, look, I mean, it's been a bit of a busy week, so you won't be expecting a long message from me!

As you all must know by now, I took time out from running the parish (which is my job, in case some of you had forgotten!), to go down to the Church Hall to answer some of the questions to which Mr Hutton wanted answers.

Hey, I don't mind. I'm very happy to give the time to helping Mr Hutton, and don't forget, it was me who asked him to look into the sad events surrounding the death of our much-loved local GP, Dr Mitty, in the first place!

And isn't that always the best thing to do – to talk about things, get them out into the open, clear the air and then move on?

So now we have! And that's what I promised to do all along! There isn't time to go into the detail – who said what to whom on such and such a date. We can leave that sort of nit-picking trivia to Mr Hutton, if he wants to go into it all. And if he wants to suggest that your Vicar was up to no good, then might I suggest that that is pretty offensive to everyone in the parish and that if it were true, then I would have to resign, which nobody wants, least of all Mr Hutton.

No. What matters is the big picture, which could not be clearer. I accept the accusation that I did nothing wrong at any stage, and I concede that my motives were always nothing more and nothing less than to serve the interests of the parish to the best of my ability, which is what I have always done!

So I hope everyone in the parish has got the message loud and clear. If there were any mistakes, which there weren't, they would not have been my mistakes (or Mr Campbell's – thanks for adding that, Al!).

The only person who possibly has anything on his conscience in this affair is Mr Hoon.

I expect you all remember how, in Old Testament times, when things went wrong, the children of Israel took a goat out into the wilderness and left it there to die *(Book of Lord Leviticus, 7.3)*.

We can learn a lot from these old stories, because the whole point of that, of course, was that the goat died, so that the rest of us could get on with our lives (apart, of course, from poor Dr Mitty!).

Yours in the clear,

Tony

✉ Parish Postbag

A Letter From The Entire Parish

Dear Vicar,

We think the time has come for you to

Yours sincerely
Your Congregation
(names supplied)

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters demanding the Vicar's resignation on the grounds that the writers are SCUM. Do you hear me? SCUM!!! A.C.

Our Treasurer Mr Brown Writes

The decision as to whether our collections should be taken in euros has been postponed indefinitely, owing to the fact that no one in the parish any longer believes a word the vicar says on any subject. This is, of course, profoundly regrettable ha ha ha ha! G.B.

Advertisement

Amazing Book Offer

Local author seeks publisher for memoirs of parish life, provisionally entitled *I Know Where The Bodies Are Buried*. It will be a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the goings-on in the vestry at St Albion's. Offers invited in the region of £10 million (over to you Mrs Reebuck and Mrs Michel, our local publishers with more sense!).

Sealed bids to: A. Campbell, The Old Spinney, Memory Lane.

NEW EDITOR FOR NEWSLETTER?

Hello, everyone!

You know who I am. And I know where you live. I just wanted to get that clear from the start. The reason that I am writing to you today is to let you know that very shortly you will be seeing a lot more of me around the church now that Mr Campbell has had a breakdown. It is sad but inevitable, given his history of mental illness and alcohol addiction. Anyone who saw him running in the parish Fun Run (for charity, of course) would have guessed that it was only a matter of time before he cracked up for good.

Anyway, every cloud has a silver lining and it's an ill wind that blows no one any good (Peter's Epistle to the Vicar Asking-For-His-Job-Back 7.3).

So, I'm back. Handy Mandy is here to solve the Vicar's problems – not that he has any, let's get that straight right away!

So, remember my slogan: "I'm a fighter, not a quitter. I'm a writer, not a drinker (unlike some people who are mad as well!)".

P. Mandelson,
The Handy Mandy Agency,
c/o The Vicarage.*

**Note new address.*

THE Sun SAYS

Britain's Summer Of Shame

WHY is it that Britain has once again come bottom *in the* summer heat death league?

France, Italy, Spain, America – all managed to notch up tens of thousands of old people keeling over in the 120 degree temperatures.

But Britain could scarcely manage to scrape up a few hundred deaths.

What has happened to Britain? First the cricket. Then the athletics. Now this.

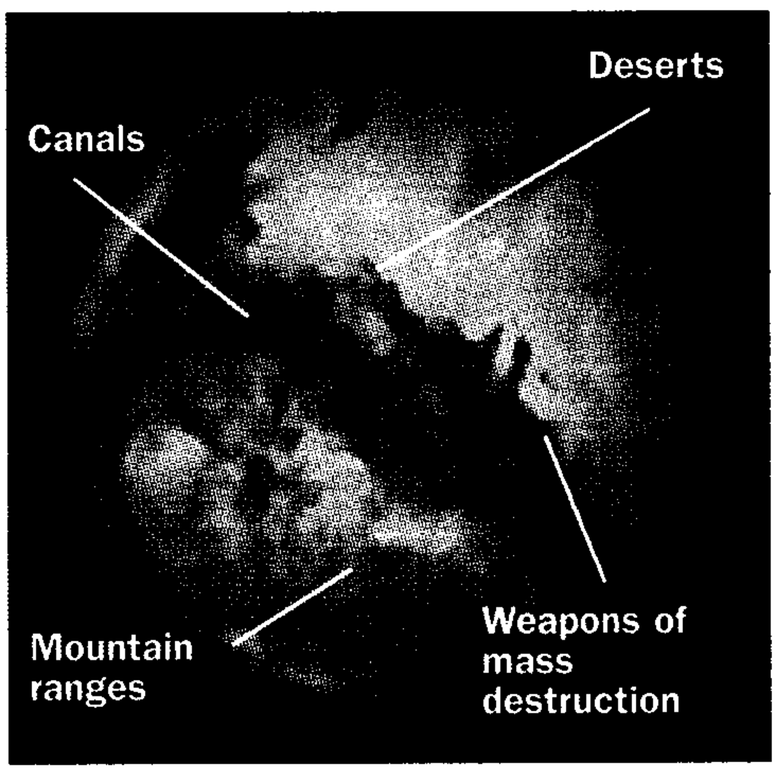
Honestly, it makes you want to curl up and die of shame.

Pictures of Dead French People 94, 95, 96.

***PLUS* Ooh, la, la – The Morgue Lovelies** 3.

"No, I'm sorry... Johnny can't come out to play"

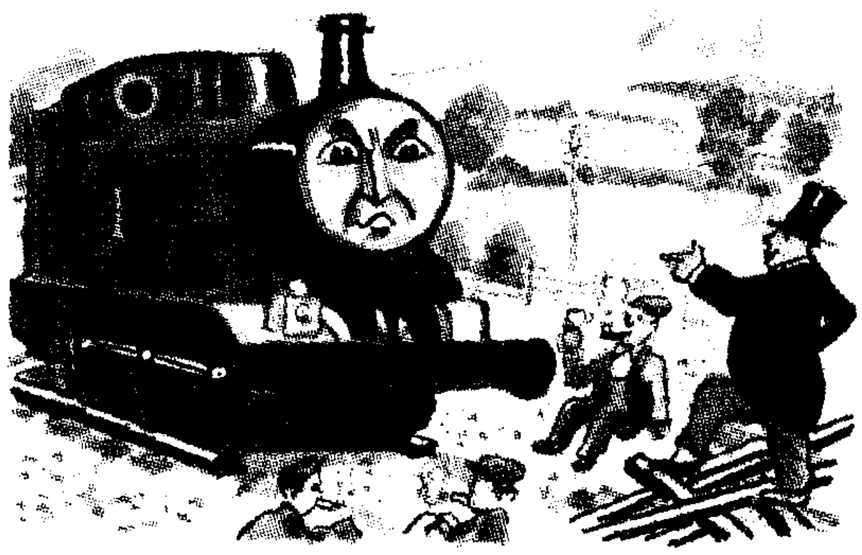
MARS: WHAT YOU CAN SEE



THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE

BY THE REV. TAWDRY

Thomas And The Holidays



THOMAS was amazed to see that all his track had been taken away and that a lot of workmen were sitting smoking on the line.

"What's going on?" he asked the Fat Controller.

"We are having to replace all the old rails and signals," came the reply.

"But what will I tell all our passengers?" asked Thomas sadly.

"Tell them they should all go on holiday until the lines are replaced."

"How long will that take?" asked Thomas anxiously.

"It could be years," laughed the Fat Controller, "so tell them to take a nice long holiday."

"But where can they go?" asked Thomas mournfully.

"Anywhere," smiled the Fat Controller, "as long as they don't need to go by train!"

© The Rev. Tawdry 2003

News In Brief

IDS TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL

THE Labour Party has announced controversial plans to make IDS freely available to everyone.

"At present it's a real postcode lottery, with IDS being readily taken up by couples in their mid-50s in the home counties, but virtually nowhere else in the country," said a Labour spokesman, "and we aim to rectify that.

"Every day we are doing all we can to make sure that IDS is available to all as the next Prime Minister come the next election."

DA VINCI PAINTING – POLICE TO ACT

THE THEFT of the "Madonna with the Yarnwinder" has prompted the police to act quickly, it was revealed today.

"Once we heard of the nature of the painting, we immediately sprang into action," said a police spokesman, "and contacted our celebrity pervert squad to investigate Mr Da Vinci and ask him why he seems so keen to paint pictures of naked kiddies.

"From our sources, we understand he has fled to sixteenth-century Italy, so he must be guilty.

"The boys are very excited. This could be bigger than Matthew Kelly."

EDINBURGH ATTRACTS OVER A MILLION

AMAZING news emerged from Edinburgh, when it was revealed that over a million stand-up comedians turned up to perform at the Fringe Festival this year.

Said a Festival spokesman, "Next year we're setting our sights higher and looking to go one further and attract enough visitors so there's one punter per comedian."

BRITISH ATHLETE IN CHEATING ROW

RUNNER Kelly Holmes won a silver medal in the Women's 800m last night and her performance prompted immediate allegations of cheating.

Said one furious commentator, "Look, British athletes don't win medals. There must have been something funny going *(cont. p. 94)*

CLOT OPERATION SUCCESSFUL

DOCTORS at the King Edward VII Hospital say a clot is sitting up in bed and doing well after being airlifted to hospital to remove a Sir Edward Heath...

HUTTON INQUIRY – DAY 95

BRITAIN'S TOP SUPER-SPY EMERGES FROM THE SHADOWS

by Top Sketchwriter
Quentin Lettspretendthisisinteresting

THE HUTTON Inquiry came alive yesterday, when the mystery figure of Britain's legendary cloak-and-dagger spy chief, known only as John Scarlett *(surely 'H'? Ed.)*, emerged blinking from the murky, shadowy world of John Le Carre's Smiley into the harsh spotlight of Court 97.

Reporters gasped with amazement as they at last saw for the first time a figure so mysterious that many of them doubted he even existed.

Suddenly, there he was – a small, bald, bespectacled man in a suit.

Could this really be the legendary 'X', a spy so brilliant that he was once expelled from Moscow for going up to Mr Brezhnev with a copy of the Times under his arm and asking, "Have you got any secrets you'd like to tell me? I'm from British Intelligence. Very hush-hush, you know"?

Certainly, the super-spy lived up to his billing, as he faced a ruthless two-hour grilling from one of Britain's most highly-paid QCs, Mr James Dingieperson.

It was an incredible, bravura tour-de-force which no one who saw it will ever remember.

That Scarlett Cross-Examination In Full

Sir Huge Dingiedrawers QC: Mr Scarlett, was any pressure put on you to 'sex up' the dossier in question?

Scarface: No.

Dingiepants: What about this e-mail from your friend Mr Campbell reading "Come on, Scarlett, you'll need to do better than this if we're going to send a million men to their deaths." Did you consider this memo to be in any way putting pressure on you to amend the dossier in a way that Mr Campbell would have found more conducive to his case?

Scarlatti: No.

Dingieknickers: Did or did you not, Mr Scarlett, alter the wording of the dossier from "there is a faint possibility that Mr Hussein might possibly have the ability to develop nuclear weapons within 45 years, but we can't be sure" to "we're all going to die in 45 minutes"?

Sir Gerald Scarfe: No.

Dingietrunks: But that is what happened, is it not, to the wording of the dossier?

Scarbootsale: It was not a dossier. It was a document designed to provide a background intelligence assessment on a matter of sensitivity pertaining to Mr Campbell's desire for the public to be fully informed on all matters relating to Iraq.

Dingiepoos: Please answer "no" or "no".

Scarlett O'Hara: No.

Dingiehose: Are you aware of this email marked "Top Secret – For Your Eyes Only", which was sent you yesterday morning from someone calling himself 'C'? It says, "If they start asking you about the dossier, just say 'no' to everything, okay? See you for dinner later."

Scarlet Pimpernel: No.

Rubberdinghy: Is there anything you would like to add?

Scartissue: No.

The Inquiry continues.

HOON ROCKS INQUIRY

IN AN electrifying performance, Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon, widely billed as the "fall guy" for the Government's "sexed-up dossier" fiasco, defied expectations by telling the inquiry that he could not remember if he knew anything about the events which had led up to whatever it was that had happened.

Asked if he had been responsible for the naming of Dr Kelly, Hoon replied, "Who is Dr Kelly? I am sorry that I have no idea who he is."

When asked whether he had had any contact with the prime minister, Hoon sipped from a glass of water before replying, "I am not sure who you are referring to. In any case, that would be something that would be dealt with by my officials."

When pressed by Mr Dinja-turtle QC as to what exactly he did do, Mr Hoon said, "It is not up to me to define the parameters of what I do. You will have to put that question to someone from Number 10."

Lord Hutton finally intervened to ask Mr Hoon whether he knew anything about anything at all. "I have no idea," replied the Defence Secretary, "I was on holiday at the time."

"Gee, that's a bummer of a birthmark, Geoff"

(Apologies to Gary Larson)

Nursery Times

Friday, 5 September, 2003

'YES, I KILLED COCK ROBIN,' ADMITS SPARROW

by Our Ornithological Staff **John Bird**

THE INQUIRY into the death of Cock Robin was rocked yesterday by the dramatic admission by the Sparrow that he "bore the ultimate responsibility for the sad death of Cock Robin".

Lord Owl, who has been hearing evidence from witnesses such as the Fly and the Fish, asked Cock Robin if he was admitting to the crime.

"I am responsible," said the Sparrow, "although it was of course entirely the fault of Cock Robin himself."

"...and I had the living room converted into a swimming pool"

CAPTAIN SCARLETT IN MYSTERON INQUIRY

by Our Political Correspondent **Gerry Bruce Anderson**

Dateline Earth 2003

TOP SECRET agent Captain Scarlett was today accused of overstating the threat of the Mysterons.

Scarlett, one of the senior figures in the intelligence agency Spectrum, was responsible for a document claiming that the so-called Mysterons had established a base on Venus from which they could launch an attack on earth "within 45 minutes".

Scarlett further claimed that the Mysterons had developed Weapons of Mars Destruction from their home planet and were planning to destroy the entire world.

Colonel Whitewash

Scarlett explained to the Inquiry that he had relied on a single Mysteron source who had told him, "This is the voice of the Mysterons" – as a result of which he had decided to invade the universe.

Captain Conrad Black is 79.

● Tomorrow: *Doctor Hoon and the Daleks.*

TOP ILLUSIONIST DOES BALANCING ACT

by Our Political Staff
Geoff Hoondini

MAGICIAN Tony Blaine, the master of deception and sleight-of-hand, has wowed crowds in London by appearing live on top of a witness box in the High Court.

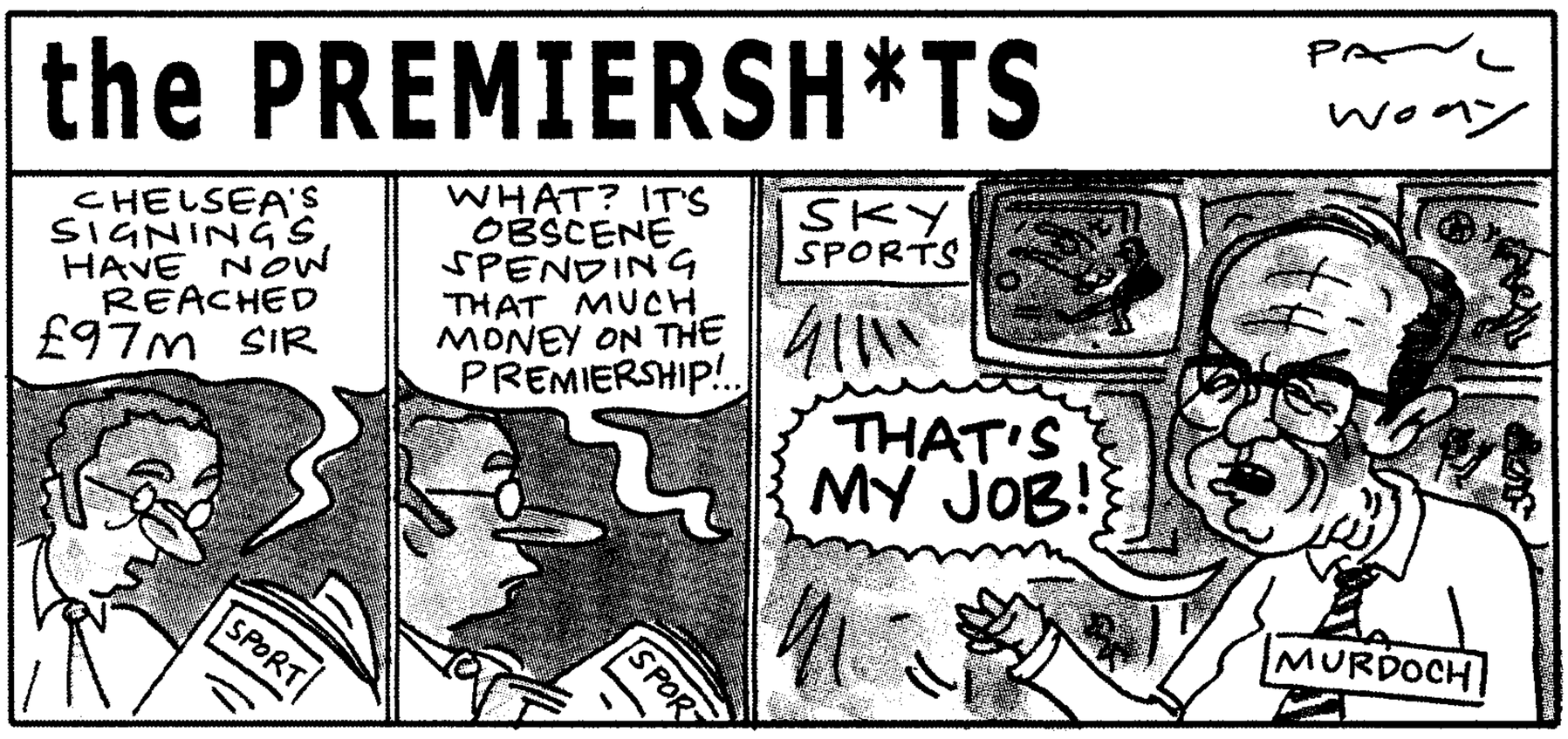
Said one witness, "He perched there without a leg to stand on and we all hoped he would fall."

But David Blair amazingly survived and is still up there, hanging by a thread.

Blaine is famous for his previous death-producing *(Surely "death-defying"? Ed.)* stunts such as invading Iraq and making weapons of mass destruction vanish into thin air.

MAN NOT CALLED KELLY FOUND DEAD – NO INQUIRY HELD

A BRITISH soldier was today found dead in Iraq, the 50th casualty of the decision to invade *(Contd. p. 94)*



BUSH PLEDGES NEW WAR ON TERROR

by Our U.N. Staff **W.M. Deedes**

IN A shock speech to the United Nations, U.S. President Bush claimed that Iraq was now a hotbed of terrorism.

"The world must act," he said, "to stamp out this evil cancer of terrorism which is threatening to destabilise the entire Middle East region.

"It is now clear," he went on, "that the forces of Mr Saddam and his friend Al Q'aeda have joined up, just as I always predicted they would.

"There is only one way we can rid the world of this threat. We must invade Iraq at once."

Mr Bush's call was immediately supported by the British prime minister. "I have given orders," he said, "that all surviving British forces must withdraw from Iraq, so that we can re-invade at once."

STOP PRESS

Opposition Leader Tipped To Restore Order To Iraq

THE U.S. occupation forces are believed to favour the return of the controversial Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, as the only man who can bring peace to terror-torn Iraq *(Reuters)*

Why Tories Will Win

by The World's Worst Columnist
Sir Hitler Hastings

AT LAST I believe the Tory leader Iain Duncan Cough has found the secret weapon which will guarantee his victory by a landslide at the next election.

I refer of course to his pledge, revealed exclusively in the current issue of *Fish and Fishermen*, that the next Conservative government will abolish the most iniquitous and hated legislative burden ever imposed on the British people – namely the 5/- a year fishing licence.

Magna Carta

To those of us who realise that the most pleasurable pastime known to man is to stand by the bank of the Itchen or the Test, holding in one's hand a £2000 cheque from the *Daily Mail (Surely 'Hurley and Paltrow fishing rod'? Ed.)*, whiling away an innocent few hours in pursuit of Johnny Trout or Jack Salmon *(Keep going. Ed.)*.

With unerring political acumen, Iain Duncan Cough has placed his finger on the one issue that unites every true-born Englishman.

I remember when I was a boy, my father taking me to the river bank and throwing me in. "Now, my boy," he called out, "you know what it feels like to be a fish."

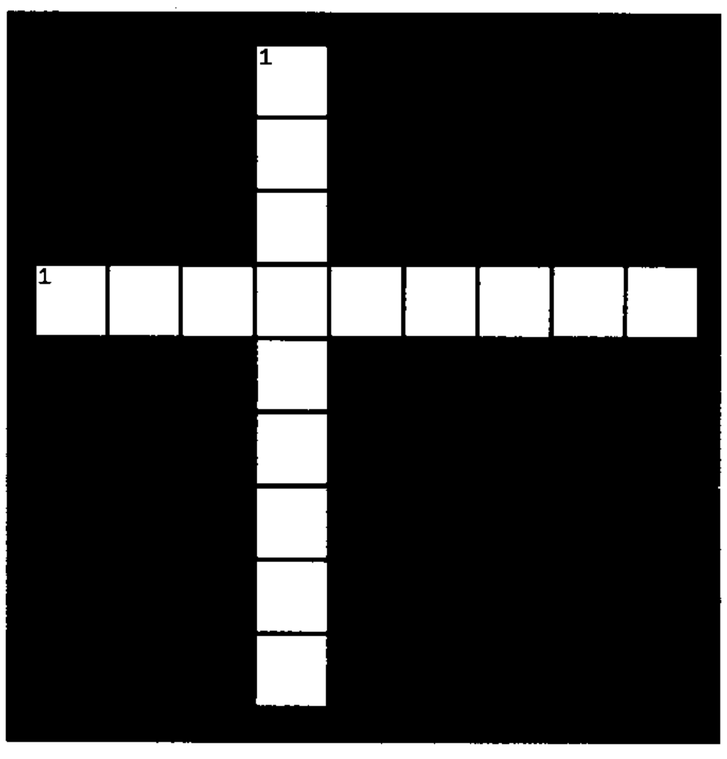
It is a lesson I have never forgotten.

© Max Hitler 2003.

■ *If you would like to read more of Sir Max Hastings's articles for the Daily Mail, you must be mad.*

THAT NEW-LOOK DAILY TELEGRAPH DUMBED-DOWN CROSSWORD

(designed by the marketing department to attract younger and more stupid readers)



Across

1. Hugh Grant's former girlfriend, famous actress) (3,6).

Down

1. Famous actress, Hugh Grant's former girlfriend (3,6).

First correct answer wins free pin-up Daily Telegraph poster of Liz Hurley, signed by editor Charles Moore.

Those Planned Sweeping Reforms To BBC News In The Wake Of The Hutton Inquiry In Full

1. News department to be merged with Downing Street Press Office.

2. Tony Blair to replace Huw Edwards as host of 10 O'Clock News.

3. Er...

4. That's it.

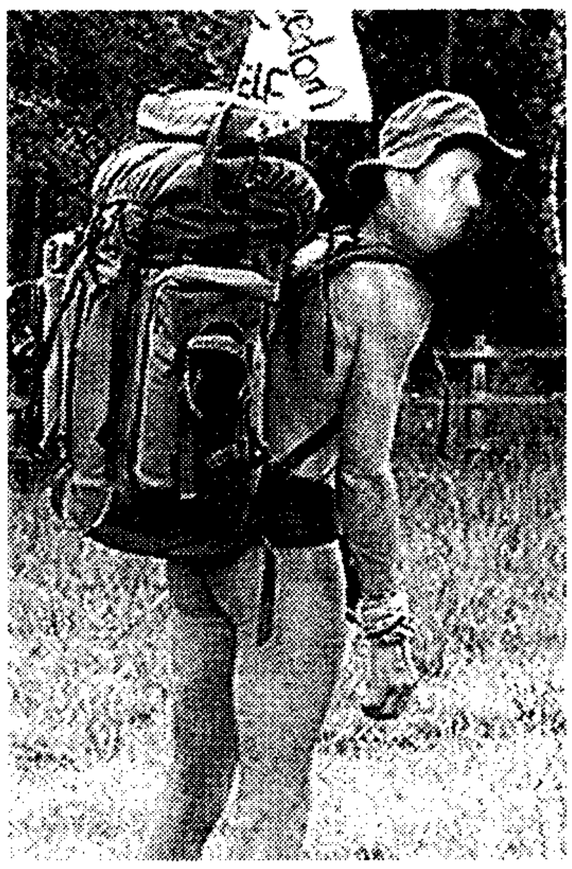
Celeb

LIGGER

MY RECENT MEETING WITH NELSON MANDELA HAS TO BE A HIGH POINT OF MY CAREER...
IT WAS AN AMAZING FEELING FOR AN OLD ROCKER LIKE ME TO BE IN HIS PRESENCE...
WHEN WE WERE PHOTOGRAPHED TOGETHER, I FELT... ER... WELL...
HUMBLE? HONOURED?
NAH: YOUNG! IT WAS BRILLIANT. HE'S 87 YOU KNOW...

"By all means take your holiday entitlement, it will give us more time to clear your desk""

NAKED LIAR BOUND OVER



by Our Rambling Staff
Squirrel Nutcase

THE NAKED liar who has caught Britain's imagination by walking all over people while telling naked lies was stopped in his tracks yesterday when Lord Hutton said, "You really must try to tell the truth, Mr Campbell, however unnatural it may seem to you."

Alastair Campbell, 47, a soon-to-be-unemployed spin doctor, said, "I am only trying to make a point that I should be allowed to tell naked lies in public whenever I want. But the BBC are deliberately trying to *(Cont'd p. 94)*

THOUSANDS QUEUE TO SEE AGEING STARS STRUT THEIR STUFF

by Our Rock Staff **Pete Townshend** (of The Hoon)

THOUSANDS of sad people *(Surely "devoted fans"? Ed.)* queued all night for the chance to hear the world's greatest cock 'n' bull group *(Surely "rock 'n' roll"? Ed.)*, led by veteran superstar Tony 'Biglips' Blair, weaving their magic in what may be their last ever performance.

In a hot, crowded venue just off the Strand, the now-legendary 'Court 73', Tony Blagger and his band pounded out some of their old familiar numbers which have kept them at Number One *(Surely 'Number Ten'? Ed.)* for seven chart-topping years.

What you did not hear (and were glad not to have done) were such hits as:

- **I Can't Find No Weapons of Mass Destruction**
- **Jumping Jack Straw**
- **Dubya's Little Helper**
- **Gordon Brown Sugar**
- **Time Is Not On Our Side**
- **My Sweet Lady Jay** *(Surely "Baroness Blackstone"? Ed.)*

'I'VE GIVEN UP BOTOX' SAYS BACHELOR BOY

by Our Showbiz Staff **Oscar Wilde**

THE ever-youthful Sir Dorian Gray, 72, has finally announced that he is to give up the age-retarding formula that has kept him at the forefront of his profession for over 100 years.

Sir Dorian said, "Artificial methods cannot work for ever. I'm now of an age where I will have to grow old gracefully – even if it does mean the odd wrinkle or two!"

Sir Dorian continued, "I think everyone will agree that I now look much better."

Before

After

DAILY MAIL Friday, September 5, 2003

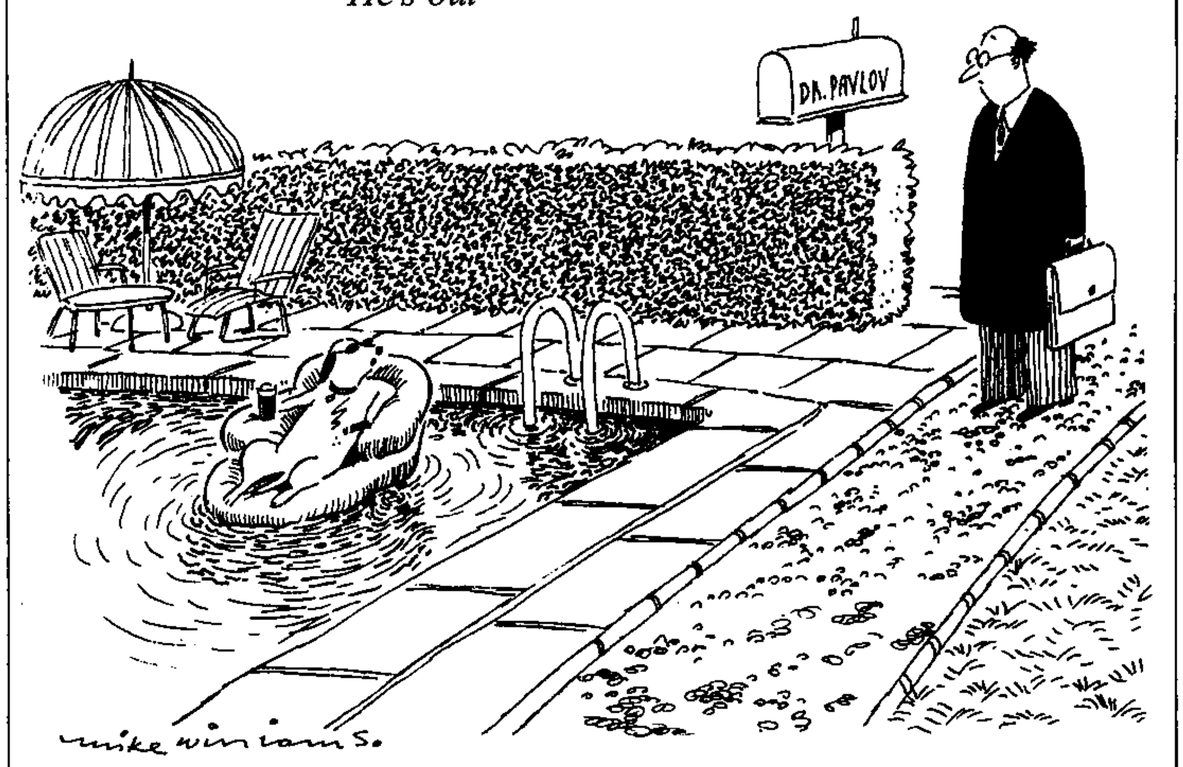
Immigration Threat From Red Planet All Too Real

EXPERTS today warned that Britain could be flooded with Martian immigrants as the Red Planet came its closest to Earth in living history.

"With a mere 35 million miles between the two planets it's almost certain that millions of scrounging layabout Martians are hanging onto the bottom of the planet, just waiting for the chance to come here to enjoy a cushy life on social security benefits," said a scientist.

ON OTHER PAGES ● Free War of the Worlds soundtrack CD for every reader – start collecting tokens today **8** ● Why Mars will send house prices crashing **12** ● Pictures of women wearing what we think Martian swimsuits may look like **38**

"He's out"



Literary Review

Naughtyreallyfunny

Politics

Adam Thirlwell

(Cape £12.99)

Hello!

My name is Adam Thirlwell. Although I am quite young, I have been thinking very seriously about the nature of comedy. I would like to share these thoughts with you.

A lot of people do not properly understand about comedy, I think.

Comedy is... naughty!

Perhaps some of you are not agreeing with me at this point. Perhaps you are thinking "I like Jane Austen and she is not naughty." Well, comedy is naughty and it is not naughty. This is called a paradox.

In my novel *Politics*, Moshe and his friends Nana and Anjali are naughty. They do boysex. They do girlsex. They have longlovesexy kisskiss. When they are not having longlovesexy kisskiss they eat pizza and go shopping.

But they are serious people, I am thinking. Just because they only have longlovesexy kisskiss, eat pizza and go shopping does not mean they are not serious people.

Or that I am not a serious novelist.

Oh no.

Comedy is... difficult?

But what kind of comedy am I?

Well, I am a bit Martin Amis *Rachel Papers* era comedy and a bit Alain de Botton when he used to write fiction comedy, but mostly I am *faux-naif* comedy.

What is *faux-naif* comedy, you are asking? Well, it is lots of short, child-like sentences ("I think you are going to like Moshe. His girlfriend's name is Nana. I think you are going to like her too") but obviously written by a very brainy person who has read, for example, the work of the French writer Stendhal.

Stendhal is a very serious and important writer.

But it is not perhaps appropriate to mention him here.

Comedy is about... funny dialogue!

When they are not eating pizza (it is nice pizza and very reasonably priced) or doing longlovesexy kisskiss, Moshe and Nana and Anjali (and Nana's papa, the banker – I think you are going to like him too) talk to each other.

Maybe I need to be precise about how they talk to each other.

You see, when Nana says "You don't mind, do you?" I put down "You don mind dyou?" And when Moshe asks her if she wants water I put down "Dyou wan water?" Later they visit a "restron".

This is not, of course, how people really talk.

But it is funny.

Comedy is... reading lists

As I said, I am serious comedy. Where I live at All Souls College, Oxford, there is a big, big library. Sometimes I am allowed to read the books. One of them is by a man named Gramsci. I like Gramsci. He says there is a thing called hegemony, which is "the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent." Moshe, Nana and Anjali are an example of hegemony, I am thinking.

Well, they had better be.

Or this would not be a serious novel!

And Mr Franklin from the publishers (I think I am going to like Mr Franklin) will be wanting his money back.

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Smelly and full of holes

Who Moved My Cheese? /For Teens/For Kids

Dr Spencer Johnson

(Vermilion, £8.99)

DR SPENCER Johnson has added a new conundrum to the pantheon of great philosophical stumpers: alongside "Why am I here?", "What is real?" and "Does Ian Duncan Smith exist?" we must now include "Who Moved My Cheese?"

Who Moved My Cheese? is a self-help book that emerged in 1998 as the dotcom bubble burst. It was desperation that fed the cheese explosion – as dotcoms began to collapse middle-managers thought that they could leaven the pain of sackings by handing downtrodden workers a book, along with their P45. *Who Moved My Cheese?* became the sugar cube that came with the pill.

Unfortunately it was the book that proved hardest to swallow. For sacked employees it was insulting in not one but three ways. One, a 94-page self-help pamphlet was not going to help pay the mortgage. Two, it was a particularly irritating self-help book, and three, if the manager thought it was actually going to help, he was plainly brain-dead which made it all the more galling that he still had a job.

Nonetheless, with a veritable dairy-depot of cheese-moving taking place in bookstores worldwide, there must be something about Johnson's allegory that has struck a chord. The story is about two mice and two "Littlepeople", searching in a maze for cheese. It begins with all four of them gorging on a monster stash, but when the cheese begins to run out the fun begins. The mice, named Sniff and Scurry, are simpletons, but by keeping things simple it is they who benefit. The Littlepeople are called Hem and Haw. They are mini human-beings, so, as their names suggest, they dally and deliberate, refusing to believe that the cheese will run out, and roundly useless when it does.

Hem is rooted to the spot by fear of what lies in the rest of the maze. But Haw heads out to find more cheese and realises that a change is as good as a rest. He unearths several maxims, which he writes on the walls of the maze. If we remove the Cheese language, which by this stage is getting a bit tiresome, they run as follows: think positive, don't be afraid, things generally work out, take control and don't mug yourself (which in self-help speak translates as "Smell the cheese often so you know when it's getting old.")

It takes little parsing to see that what consultants would call the "key learnings" of Johnson's fable are resplendently familiar. These are things your mother told you, many of them lazy truisms that experience proves to be roundly untrue.

They're made palatable by the muddy semantics. Self-helpers such as Dr J wallow in words with countless meanings that morph and mutate with every use. "Change" is a prime example here, a large, nebulous concept, that can be slotted into any prescription and made to sound convincing. Essentially Johnson argues that we should embrace change – "move with the cheese". It's hard to disagree with that, largely because it's meaningless.

Perhaps more insidiously the book has one other maxim, which is that "Old Beliefs Do Not Lead You to New Cheese". You have to admire Johnson's chutzpah on this one. Essentially he's saying you should change what you believe – and reading *Who Moved My Cheese?* wouldn't be a bad place to start. Such sleight-of-hand dovetails nicely with his preface, where he bats off his critics by saying "The story is only as good as you want it to be" – a delightful cover-all that means if you don't like it you're probably a hemming and hawing littleperson afflicted with exactly the myopia Dr Johnson is describing.

To be fair to the author, he's followed his credo to the letter. If one self-help book looked like being an enduring source of cheese, he hasn't rested on his laurels. Instead, he's sniffed and scurried around for every last cheesy pay-cheque, in the form of a slew of "New Cheese services" – a *WMMC?* personal planner, a self-scoring tool, a 13-minute animated movie and an interactive program for business use "to help organizations and individuals change and win". And now he's coming for your children.

This year the cheese-moving merry-go-round turned its attention to Kids, with a special edition published in May, and then Teens, with another special edition published in July. He must have been working darned hard to bang out a wholesale revision in two months. But then given that the language for the original was so diddy-simple there was really very little to change – 54 of the 94 pages of the original are replicated to the letter in the Teens edition. Bar the cover, the only additions are a few more illustrations and a new fictitious "discussion". In the original, adults told the cheese story at a high-school reunion. Now it's schoolkids discussing their various predicaments. But at the end all of them agree that Dr Johnson's story, available in all bookshops now, has made everything better.

Johnson's half-baked allegory made him a fortune, so in that sense it's fair to say that *Who Moved My Cheese?* will indeed make you very happy – but only if you wrote it.

BOOKS & BOOKMAN

■ THE entertaining spat between A. N. Wilson and John Bayley might be vicious – in his new book *Iris Murdoch As I Knew Her* Wilson describes her husband as a "screaming, hate-filled child" who bullied his wife in life and has exploited her in death – but it is a relatively new development.

Reviewing Bayley's *Iris* for the *Literary Review* back in September 1998, Wilson was effusive in his praise for his former tutor. "It was only in the good-humoured and calm domestic shell provided by Bayley that Iris's wild earlier selves could find a happy resting place and turn themselves into fiction", he wrote. "He is far too clever, stylish and modest to make this claim for himself, of course, but it is this simple fact which these too short pages proclaim. And that is why this book is not merely autobiography. It is a continuation of Bayley's great work as a critic."

■ AS *Sun* readers know, their editor Rebekah Wade's dislike of paedophiles knows no bounds.

The paper's front page demand to "BAN VILE PAEDO BOOK" on 26 August was prompted not by anything on the shelves of British bookshops, but by work published more than three years ago by an obscure Philadelphia-based outfit and on sale only in the US.

Still, as the paper pointed out, "The £6.50 book, *Understanding Loved Boys and Boylovers*, is a top-seller on books website Amazon – used by millions of Britons."

Yes it is – but only on the American version of the site, not the UK one. While British readers could pay to have it imported should they want to, most – unless they had read similar demands for a ban in the American press last autumn – would have remained blissfully unaware of the book's existence, were it not for the *Sun*'s front page exposé. As it is, thanks to the free advertising, the book jumped up Amazon's best-seller lists from around 30,000th position to 4,505th on the day the *Currant Bun*'s story appeared. No doubt the publishers are suitably grateful to Ms Wade.

■ A RECENT *London Review of Books* advertisement for academic publisher Anthem Press quoted a very favourable review for *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation* by Bharat Tandon, director of studies in English at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

In the words of one Robert Macfarlane, "Bharat Tandon's brilliant study refreshes not only our sense of Austen's stylistic acuity and wit, but also much broader issues of how and why we read. This superbly zesty book will become prescribed reading for anyone working on Austen."

Lovely, but who is Macfarlane? By an astonishing coincidence, he is a fellow and lecturer in English at, er, Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

'Bookworm'

HIGH PRINCIPALS

WITH a new university year in the offing, most academics will already be sharpening their pencils in preparation. However, when term starts departments at institutions up and down the country will be discovered to have vanished and courses closed over the long vac.

In July, Cambridge announced that it was to axe its architecture Part II diploma. The move followed the department's loss of its fifth star, which meant that it also lost a significant chunk of its funding.

At King's College, London, the 45 new first years due to start chemistry degree courses had their places withdrawn because there were not enough tutors to teach them. A decision on the department's long-term future is due later this year.

In Stirling, the Biology department has been merged with the Environmental Science department, following the departure of many of its full-time teaching staff and serious budget cuts.

Cash problems at Durham have led to the closure of the East Asian studies department, with the language courses shuffled into the modern language faculty and other courses lost.

Harris Manchester College, a mature students' college at Oxford University, will no longer be taking students to read history. Former historians who studied there in the past suggest that the move is in part down to the department's resistance to changes by the college's management. The college claims financial constraints.

Dozens more top departments are closing or are abandoning specific courses. So what's going on? Academics may suspect conspiracies – and universities will doubtless axe the most politically troublesome departments first if they have to make cutbacks. But what's clear is that the current system of higher education funding is likely to see many more long-established departments vanishing in the near future.

AD NAUSEAM

BEFORE last week's power failure shambles, the current campaign promoting the virtues of the Tube was almost funny. No longer. It reminds us how much we ♥ various aspects of London. The tagline informs us that Transport for London (TfL) also ♥ these same places, and to prove it the ♥ is replaced by an Underground logo.

It is a cross-media campaign that will run in the capital for five-weeks, meaning you are much more likely to see a 96-sheet extolling the virtues of our magnificent metro than you are to get anywhere on time.

Timing, of course, is everything in marketing, and there are reasons why this campaign emerges now. Livingstone assumed control of London Underground in July, and only a month later we are being asked to sit up and marvel at how great it is. Next year will bring the mayoral elections.

As if all this wasn't enough, the campaign was midway through its run when Leninspart announced that fares on Underground journeys in Central London would go up by 25 per cent next year, in direct contradiction to one of his electoral manifesto pledges, which stated that Tube prices would be pinned to inflation.

A rifle through the maths is predictably galling – Livingstone hopes to raise £42m for the Tube through the ticket price increases. The current advertising campaign is costing £4m for press and poster work; it is likely that the two 40-second TV executions will cost TfL at least the same again. This means that Livingstone has started making up his vast budget deficit by spending a fifth of that deficit again, on a lavish ad campaign that specifically avoids the problem, which is the pisspoor service. Keen-eyed observers will note that not one of the ads features a Tube train. This was deliberate, according to agency M&C Saatchi's creative director Matt Eastwood: "We made a definite decision not to feature the actual trains. In my mind, they are just a delivery mechanism. The metal seemed a bit irrelevant." This may explain why the tube does not on the whole, er, deliver.

Pseuds Corner

I had reached that point in life when one has published a novel or two…

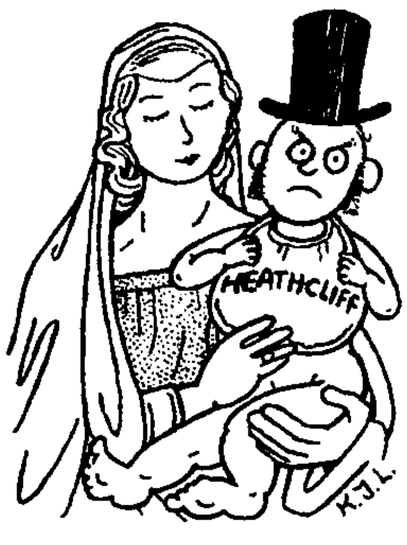
PHILIP HENSHER
Independent

Two years on and Richard Appignanesi – "the most intelligent man in Britain" , according to Melvyn Bragg – asks 'Did you wish for 9/11 too?'
- Is Islamist terrorism a postmodern clone of the Cold War?
- Is America the last Grand Narrative?
- Is Postmodernism history? Or does American hyperpower mean that History itself is now a thing of the past?

Press release for Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, *Introducing Postmodernism* (Icon Books)

Everything he has to say about Dylan is original. [Christopher] Ricks is a critic who seems to be talking to you from within the work. He can turn the smallest niche in a poem or song into a vast cathedral of resonance and implication. On the album Self Portrait, for example, there is a song that consists solely of the lines "All the tired horses in the sun/How'm I s'posed to get any ridin' done?/Hmmm." Ricks devotes four pages to this, bringing in Keats, Tennyson, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Gilbert & Sullivan and Browning, before, brilliantly, establishing the theme of sloth that permeates the album.

BRYAN APPLEYARD
Sunday Times



He is the most fierce and rugged-looking creature. We had planned to call him Felix, but he is far too wild. So we have made that his middle name, and called him Heathcliff, after the character in Wuthering Heights.

Old Etonian financier EUAN RELLIE welcomes his first-born, 'London Spy',
Daily Telegraph

The novelist Patrick Neate tells a story of interviewing the singer [Mary J. Blige] in 1997. They were on top of a five-star hotel, Blige in thousands of dollars worth of fashions, the roof terrace knee-deep in photographers and primpers. Without warning, she leant over the edge of the building and spat. Through fair means or foul, at all times Blige demands respect.

TOM HORAN
Telegraph Magazine

Pseuds Corporate

Burger King Corporation Appoints Mike Ellis Chief Development Officer
Proven Executive Brings Significant Restaurant Experience
Cost-Sensitive Brand-Friendly Development Capability and
A Strategic Mindset to the Development Function

Burger King press release

CONTRIBUTORS: Tim Kirkup, Strobes, D.S. Brittain, P. Reilly, 'Rick', Geoff Collyer.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

OBEIDI EYE

DR DAVID KELLY was not the only expert on Saddam's weapons of mass destruction to be badly treated. Former UN weapons inspector David Albright told *Private Eye* he would be forced to advise Iraqi scientists to "be very wary" approaching the coalition forces with details of Saddam's WMD programmes after he had to help one such man, Mahdi Obeidi, who was arrested and detained by the US.

Obeidi approached the Allies after the war with parts for a nuclear centrifuge which Saddam's son-in-law had forced him to bury in his back garden – such centrifuges are used to make atom bombs. The scientist, who led Saddam's nuclear enrichment plans, also presented thousands of documents for a nuclear weapons programme. Jack Straw highlighted Obeidi's revelation as proof that Saddam did have WMD. Had he asked more about Obeidi he would have found the scientist was intimidated and let down by the Allies because he made the wrong kind of revelations.

Obeidi's hidden centrifuge parts and documents proved a real breach of the UN inspection regime. Obeidi also said he had heard of a study group formed in June last year to do theoretical work on nuclear weapons. However, while his evidence showed Iraq had hopes of one day resuming its nuclear plans, they did not amount to an active WMD programme. Consequently, when Obeidi approached the Allies he was initially ignored. Worse still, Obeidi also said that a set of aluminium tubes that Saddam tried to buy were not for nuclear centrifuges. President Bush highlighted the claim that these aluminium tubes proved Iraq's active nuclear programme in his state-of-the-union address. Blair also referred to the tubes-for-nukes assertion in his first dossier. Emails produced in the Hutton inquiry show Alastair Campbell wanted them emphasised in the dossier's "executive summary".

Obeidi was scared he would be killed in postwar Iraq, either by Saddam loyalists wanting to shut him up, or by Iraqis angry at his work for the regime. He also feared being arrested by the Allies, and wanted to tell the coalition the truth about Iraq's WMD schemes. He contacted former weapons inspector David Albright to ask for help after being turned away by the Allies. Albright told the *Eye* "it was exhausting" trying to get a fair hearing for Obeidi. At one stage the scientist was arrested because what he had to say, especially on the aluminium tubes, was "not the answer they wanted to hear", and held in detention in Iraq for two months. After press interest in this unfair treatment, Obeidi was finally moved to the US with his family. The very rattled scientist is still being debriefed at an undisclosed location. A promised green card has yet to materialise.

Albright told the *Eye* that if an Iraqi scientist approached him now with revelations about Saddam's programmes he would urge them to be extremely cautious. "Unless you [can] confirm that there was a big active Biochem programme... you may have a rough time." Albright said "people like David Kay [America's top weapons inspector]... are very resistant to taking on board" anything that does not confirm pre-war claims of Iraq's active WMD systems. He said allied weapons inspectors should "find out the truth, not try and deny the truth and stick to a position taken earlier".

Privatisers on parade

WHEN New Labour sees a shambles, such as the state of the NHS, the railways or the schools, its instinct is to reach for a contract and hope the private sector can sort out the mess. So it's perhaps no surprise, then, that Labour is privatising the biggest shambles of them all – the security situation in Iraq.

Bomber Short's former department, International development (DfID), has hired private soldiers to guard its staff in Iraq, rather than rely on the British Army. The Foreign Office also plans to hire armed guards to protect the British Embassy in Baghdad, although the contract is on hold during the current security alert. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) is licensing a host of private soldiers to bear arms in Iraq. Their rules of engagement – including the circumstances in which they may shoot Iraqis – appear unregulated and vague.

Private Eye asked leading security consultants Control Risks if they knew anything about guarding DfID staff. Control Risks has long had good links with the Government – they hire former FO civil servants, and sponsor the Foreign Policy Centre, a think-tank whose patron is Tony Blair. Control Risks refused to comment. After the bombing last month of the UN HQ in Baghdad, however, they rushed out a press release offering their services to "perform thorough security audits on their premises and to ensure that perimeter security is extremely robust". In fact the DfID is paying Control Risks £1.7m to supply an "armed protection team". The DfID have a separate contract for a £270,000 "close protection team" with an unknown and possibly *ad hoc* firm called "Meteoric Tactical Solutions Pty Ltd". *Private Eye* asked the DfID why they were using soldiers-for-hire rather than the British Army, to be told they felt the Army was "busy doing its own thing". Asked whether the contract included any discussion of their guards' rules of engagement – including in which circumstances they would use deadly force, whether they must give warnings in Arabic or other languages – the DfID refused to comment. As coalition forces have on a number of occasions mistakenly shot unarmed Iraqis and others, and as at least one UN private security guard has been shot, these are not abstract or facetious questions. A private security firm was guarding the UN compound at the time of the lorry bomb attack.

The Foreign Office confirmed it had put the guarding of the British Embassy in Baghdad out to tender, and selected a contractor. However, "British forces are guarding the perimeter of the embassy and will continue to do so until the security situation changes". The FO confirmed the private guards "would be armed" when they take over the contract. "We would expect the company themselves to approach the licensing authority to ask permission to bear arms." In this case the "licensing authority" is the British and US occupying forces. The FO would not reveal the name of the firm, but said it will become public when the guards move into post. It seems likely that a large, well-known firm would win such a contract. Control Risks would be a contender, as would Group 4. The latter already has a contract for "the protection of the coalition forces headquarters at Basra" as well as guarding several oil installations.

A tale of two bombings

RELATIONS between the British government and Iran are deteriorating fast. Richard Dalton, Britain's ambassador in Teheran, is on holiday in the UK but may never go back.

The rift in relations with Iran has its roots in Argentina, where a new president, Nestor Kirchner, has ordered a thorough investigation into the terrorist bombings of a Jewish student centre in July 1994. The investigation has linked the bombing, which killed nearly 100 people, to "nine days of terror" launched in July 1994 by well-organised and highly subsidised Iranian terrorists in retaliation for an attack by Israel on Southern Lebanon in June 1993 and the bombing the following month of what was described by Israel as a "guerrilla training headquarters" which killed 30 teenagers in a summer camp. Successive governments in Buenos Aires have failed to carry out any proper inquiry into the 1994 bombing there, but the current president has insisted on a full inquiry even if, as turned out to be the case, many of the suspects were anti-Semitic police and intelligence officers. As part of these inquiries, Argentine investigators sought the extradition from Britain of Hadi Soleimanpour, the Iranian ambassador in Buenos Aires at the time of the bombings, who has been studying in Durham. Mr Soleimanpour was arrested by British police in August. The Iranian government has threatened to cut off all diplomatic relations if he stays in custody.

There is a further complication for the British authorities. Two young Palestinians, Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh, were convicted in 1996 of the Israeli embassy bombing. Neither of them played any part in the bombing and the evidence against them as conspirators was extremely weak. Part of their defence was the much more likely proposition (repeated in several British papers at the time) that the Iranian government was involved. Two defendants in the same trial were acquitted, and the convicted pair have continued to protest their innocence ever since.

In 1997 former MI5 agent David Shayler said he had been told by an MI5 colleague that British intelligence had been warned before the bombings of an impending terrorist attack on the Israeli embassy. At a later appeal of the two Palestinians, MI5 was forced to admit that there had been such a warning from an unidentified "organisation" . This warning was never disclosed at the 1996 trial. This gross breach of the rules was attributed to "human error".

The position now is that the British authorities have in custody an Iranian official suspected of terrorist bombing against a Jewish target in the Argentine in the same month and of exactly the same type as a terrorist bombing against a Jewish target in London for which they have already imprisoned two young Palestinians who have always protested their innocence.

LOCKERBIE

Just Fancy That

Dr Hans Koechler

NONE of the British papers that published the agreement by the Libyan government to pay £1.7bn to the families of those who died in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing found space to publish the forthright statement of Austrian professor Dr Hans Koechler, one of the UN-appointed observers at the Scottish trial of two Libyans for the bombing. One of the suspects was acquitted, the other, Abdul Basset Al-Megrahi, was convicted of mass murder and sent to prison for life.

On 23 August Dr Koechler observed: "It is highly likely that the sentenced Libyan national is not guilty as charged, and that one or more countries other than Libya, through their intelligence services and/or financial and logistical support for a terrorist group, may have responsibility for the crime... Terrorism cannot be fought through a political deal aimed at covering up the truth... The doubts and misgivings about the Lockerbie trial...will only disappear when a full investigation of the crime by an independent commission will have been undertaken. Up to this moment, the undersigned will maintain his doubts about the Lockerbie verdict and will consider the judgement... a miscarriage of justice."

TAX AVOIDANCE

There GLO your spending plans, Gordon

WHILE Treasury ministers start another round of formal consultations with big business on reform of the corporation tax system, they are simultaneously facing the biggest threat to their tax income in living memory. This threat is known in Treasury circles as "Operation Glo-Worm".

On 11 August, the Inland Revenue website quietly announced two new group litigation orders, known as GLOs, which were made in the High Court on 30 July. The first is called "CFC and EU dividend group litigation". This refers to a rule introduced in 1984 by Nigel Lawson when he was Chancellor. The Thatcher government, on taking office in 1979, immediately abolished exchange controls. By 1984, Lawson, rather late in the day, accepted the argument of his Revenue advisers that British companies were taking advantage of the abolition of exchange controls by setting up subsidiary companies in tax havens and "investing" millions of pounds in them on which all interest was tax-free. Lawson's law, known as the "controlled foreign companies legislation", plugged this loophole by forcing companies either to pay taxable dividends from the investments back to the UK or to pay tax on the interest.

The GLO companies allege that the Lawson law discriminates against British companies with subsidiaries in European countries that are subject to significantly lower rates of tax (or none at all). The same law doesn't apply to British companies with subsidiaries in Britain. In a nutshell, the companies in the GLO are seeking to reclaim the benefits of what even Nigel Lawson regarded as tax avoidance. The lead claimant in this category is Scottish & Newcastle PLC.

The second GLO is called "thin cap group litigation". This challenges long-standing rules to ensure that multinational companies operating in the UK don't wipe out or excessively reduce their taxable profits by funding their British subsidiaries with huge debts – the interest on which is tax-deductible. The lead claimant in this category is the Bank of Ireland and its British subsidiary, Bristol & West PLC.

The tax avoidance if this litigation is successful will be gigantic. Hundreds of millions, probably billions, could be lost to the Exchequer, affecting the Chancellor's plans for public expenditure for years to come. Though the orders have been made in the High Court (*Eye* 1084), Mr Justice Park has already decided that a similar issue in a case involving Marks & Spencer should go straight to the European courts. The outlook there for the British tax authorities is bleak. The European judges are favourably disposed to companies seeking to avoid tax, and are quick to over-rule what they regard as "discriminatory" domestic tax-gathering legislation. Moreover, the statute of limitations, which prevents legal actions after six years, has already been over-ruled in a British High Court case in July involving tax and "discrimination" in Europe (Deutsche Morgan Grenfell v Inland Revenue Commissioners). If the period for claiming back tax is held to be unlimited, the amounts for which the Treasury could be held liable under the GLOs are even more immense.

The tax avoidance if this litigation is successful will be gigantic. Hundreds of millions, probably billions, could be lost to the Exchequer

Who are the companies gathering eagerly in prospect of such unexpected largesse from the British taxpayer? Over the next few weeks their names may be added to the GLO registers. A proposal by the big City lawyers who keep the registers, Dorsey and Whitney (a branch of a powerful US legal conglomerate) that the companies might try to keep their names secret has now been abandoned. The *Eye* will be keeping a close watch on the registers. In the meantime, Treasury ministers, led by Paymaster General "Red" Dawn Primarolo, included in their consultation document on 12 August a series of proposals intended to close some of the loopholes which they fear GLOs will open — in other words to close the stable door after the tax avoidance horse has bolted.

Free at last – but for how long?

WHEN will the bureaucrats at the Home Office apply some common sense in the case of David Blagden (*Eyes passim*)? Readers will remember that Blagden served more than 24 years in prison – longer than most murderers, rapists and terrorists – for setting fire to some church curtains in a village near Oxford.

Everyone involved acknowledges this was a cry for help after his adoptive parents died within days of one another.

He was freed last year, after a campaign supported by his MP, the vicar at the church concerned, the local newspaper and others. Blagden had harmed no one, caused only a very small amount of damage and had waited for the police to come and arrest him.

But his hard-won freedom was short lived. He went awol from the probation hostel where he was supposed to live as part of the conditions of his "life" licence from jail. Because of the "breach", he was recalled to prison 10 months ago, while Home Office and probation staff decided whether to oppose his freedom or call for stricter restrictions upon it.

Blagden had done what he always does when pressure mounts – he runs away. He never does any harm and he usually gives himself up after taking advice from friends or his legal team. But the only solution applied by officials to his inability to abide by the rules has been to continue to incarcerate him.

Last month the parole board let him out again, with an onerous list of restrictions governing his behaviour and treatment – again more than serious "lifers" who have killed and maimed. So strict, in fact, that his legal team believe they amount to a breach of his human rights and will be subject to judicial review. One, for example, governs his access to the media, which probation officers claimed puts him under "excessive pressure and destabilised" him. Media interest fuelled his "personal belief that he was the victim of major injustice", they said.

Er – but David Blagden *is* a victim of a major injustice. He should never have been given a life sentence in the first place – the discretionary sentence was only imposed by the trial judge because psychiatrists could not agree on his mental state and it was believed he would be out as soon as proper help could be obtained for him.

Surely a more sensible approach now would be to admit the injustice, accept that 25 years in jail is a cruelly excessive penalty for causing a few hundred pounds' worth of damage and free Blagden of the kind of restrictions which could easily put him back inside again.

Suicide watch

THE INDEPENDENT investigation launched into a spate of suicides at Styal women's jail in Cheshire should be extended to look at equally disturbing events in Armley men's prison in Leeds, where five inmates have killed themselves in the last 18 months.

So far only an internal inquiry has been ordered into the death last week of 24-year-old Michael Proctor, who made a noose and hanged himself in the jail's segregation unit.

Internal documents seen by the *Eye* reveal that Proctor, a known suicide risk, had told a visitor on the afternoon of his death that he needed to see a doctor because he was suicidal and hearingvoices. He was taken to the prison health centre, but the doctor refused to see him as he wasn't on his list. Proctor was returned to the segregation unit.

Proctor had told the visitor he had already made an attempt on his life that morning and promised her he would do it again "properly". Worried about his safety, she told staff about his threats. They said Proctor was already on suicide watch and they were trying to get another appointment with a doctor. Proctor fulfilled his promise before any appointment was made.

No doubt the internal inquiry will speedily explain why a known suicide risk was placed alone in a cell with access to material with which to fashion a noose – and was denied help despite having made his intentions abundantly clear.

Ill Met by moped

THREE YEARS after a London police officer drove a squad car into teenager Sherman Thomas, crushing him against a wall, there is still no word of any disciplinary action.

Officers believed Thomas, 18, had been riding a stolen moped, which he then abandoned. He was rammed *after* he had surrendered to police following a short chase through the St Matthews estate in Brixton. Transcripts of a radio conversation between officers and the ambulance service reveal an officer saying: "He's conscious and screaming, yeah, teach him to nick mopeds." Later, an ambulance service employee asks a police officer to stop laughing.

No charges were ever brought against Thomas over the bike, which he had borrowed from a friend. Once a promising basket-ball player, he has already undergone a series of operations for a compound fracture – including skin grafts and the insertion of metal plates in his leg. He is expected to have more surgery later this year.

Following an investigation by West Midlands police, the CPS decided at the end of 2001 that no police officers would face criminal charges. Since then the Thomas family have been waiting to find out if any disciplinary charges will follow. Another complaint is that vital evidence was lost because police failed to treat the area as a crime scene. When a forensic team arrived the same day to inspect the wall damaged in the crash, they found the local authority had already knocked it down on police instructions.

The Police Complaints Authority has already apologised to Thomas about the "unacceptable" delay in the case and told the *Eye* that a final decision is expected soon. Meanwhile Thomas's lawyers have issued a civil claim for damages against the Met.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

STANDARD CHARTERED faces another embarrassing confrontation with the financial regulators in Jersey following the row over the £100m in commissions, aka bribes, paid to the most powerful man in Qatar via the bank's trust company.

An internal investigation of the Jersey trust company has discovered evidence that strongly suggests Standard Chartered may have been in breach of the UN and UK sanctions orders on Iraq.

According to regulatory sources with knowledge of the investigation, more than 50 accounts have been discovered linked to Iraqi nationals which had not been previously identified and frozen as required under the sanctions order.

In particular one account had been closed and emptied of its contents of around £1m in breach of the ban on transferring Iraqi funds put in place in late 2000.

These accounts were held by Iraqi nationals giving addresses outside Iraq, particularly in nearby Jordan. Standard Chartered appears in some cases to have narrowly interpreted the sanctions order to freeze accounts as only applying to Iraqis in Iraq.

It has emerged that the trust company knew little about its Iraqi clientele and whether any of them had links to Saddam Hussein. Jordan was a key "middle man" for Iraqi oil exports and vital imports. Many of those Iraqi businessmen based in Jordan were part of Saddam's support network for breaching UN sanctions.

Standard Chartered is understood to have admitted this breach to the Jersey Financial Services Commission earlier this year. The JFSC then issued a production order to obtain information from the trust company. It subsequently launched an investigation by a firm of outside accountants into the trust company's operations.

The JFSC was less than pleased to discover Standard Chartered's Iraqi problem. It has still not decided what action to take over the trust company's failure to fully disclose its dealings with Qatar's foreign minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al Thani. Jersey began a criminal investigation into the £100m paid into the trust company accounts by British, French and Italian defence contractors which was dropped last year after Sheikh Hamad paid £6m towards the investigation costs.

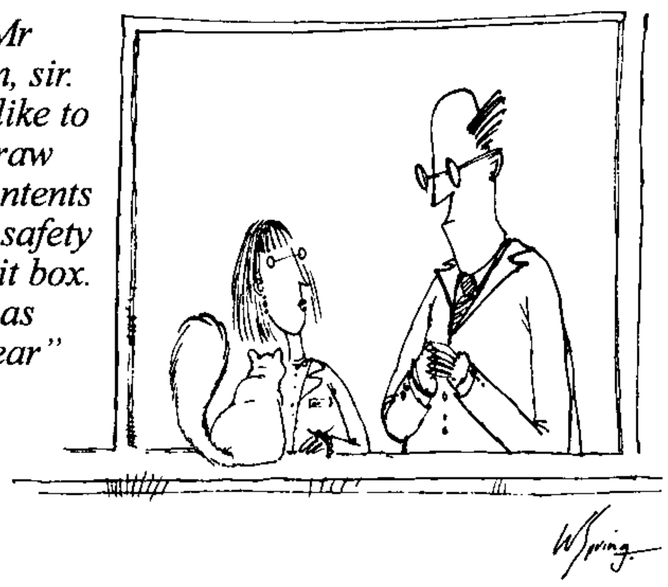
This new investigation is understood to have uncovered more than 50 and perhaps as many as 90 Iraqi linked accounts containing several million pounds. These have since been frozen. Investigators determined that Standard Chartered had no meaningful procedures in place to comply with the 2000 sanctions order.

Two reports on the investigation have now been sent to the Jersey regulators who could meet with bank officials as early as this week. The reports are understood to be highly critical of Standard Chartered management both in Jersey and at its London headquarters.

It is considered more than likely that Standard Chartered could face a heavy fine as well as further regulatory action both from the JFSC and possibly also the Financial Services Authority, which has been kept informed of the Jersey investigation.

The Jersey regulators are understood to have been unimpressed by the bank's application of the all-important, supposedly stringent "KYC-Know Your Customer" rules at the trust company. It also suspects that Standard Chartered in London took a too relaxed view of its offshore operations. The Jersey trust company was acquired in 2000 as part of a deal with the ANZ banking group. The lax standards have been blamed by Standard Chartered on the old ANZ management.

"It's Mr Nutkin, sir. He'd like to withdraw the contents of his safety deposit box. Same as last year"



However, it is said that some Standard Chartered executives in London are suspected of initially looking to sweep the Iraqi problem under the carpet relying on the excuse of a narrow interpretation of the meaning of the sanctions order. There is said to have been debate within Standard Chartered about whether the initial Iraqi account that revealed the problem needed to be disclosed in line with Bank of England guidelines. The advice from the trust company's lawyers and managers is said to have been that it must be disclosed. That advice was subsequently accepted resulting in the JFSC investigation.

Ironically the latest Jersey row comes as Standard Chartered has led the way back into Iraq as part of the consortium appointed to manage the new Trade Bank of Iraq set up by the American administrators. Unlike the other members of the consortium, it appears Standard Chartered may be among friends.

PERHAPS not entirely surprisingly the *Sunday Telegraph* took a more sympathetic view of the row engulfing brokers Collins Stewart and its chief executive Terry Smith following the allegations of share ramping and conflicts of interest made by sacked analyst James Middleweek. But not only is the abrasive, ex-iconoclast Smith a regular columnist for the *Sunday Tel* – he was writing there last weekend even after the row broke. Business editor Robert Peston is a former Collins Stewart employee who ran its Quest online analysis service. He was also allotted 3,164 shares at the time of the Collins Stewart flotation in 2000. Less than two years later Peston moved to the *Sunday Tel* where he has disclosed his previous Collins Stewart employment when writing about Smith. This was not necessary last weekend, as he was said to be "away" and so was not required to comment on his old boss's problems.

AIM-listed Stockcube, which provides independent research and analysis services, hosts the unheralded City comeback of accountant Andrew "Rusty" Ashman who has stayed out of the spotlight since he featured in the Atlantic Computers/British & Commonwealth scandal. Ashman was appointed a director of Stockcube last February and is a large shareholder.

He was successful – along with B&C chairman John Gunn – in 1998 in defending a case after the Department of Timidity & Inaction brought disqualification proceedings against nine directors. This followed a highly critical DTI inspectors' report into the Atlantic Computers collapse in 1990, two years after it had been acquired by B&C for £408m.

The DTI inspectors in their 1994 report singled out Gunn, former finance director Ashman and former chief executive Peter Goldie for criticism for failing to spot the major problems in Atlantic's computer leasing operations. Ashman, like the other two, was criticised as having been in breach of his duty as a director in not informing the full B&C board and auditors of Atlantic's difficulties and not ensuring that the B&C accounts gave a true and fair view of its financial position. They were also accused of being "unwilling to face up to the implications for B&C of the fundamental problems affecting Atlantic" and criticised for failing to intervene more forcefully in the management of Atlantic.

The inspectors, however, accepted that Ashman and the others had been acting – erroneously – in what they saw was B&C's best interests and were not dishonest. And as the judge declined to disqualify Ashman from being a director that must be right and the criticisms unmerited, with which Stockcube obviously agrees.

IT IS GOOD to see that, unlike the Financial Services Authority which looked the other way, the Serious Farce Office seems determined to bring a prosecution against Imperial Consolidated conmen Lincoln Fraser and Jared Brook despite the difficulties of a world-wide investigation chasing the fate of investors' missing £200m. Although Imperial was run from Lincolnshire and then London the FSA said it could not act because the scam was notionally happening offshore.

An indication of the SFO's intent is that it has requested and obtained agreement from the Treasury to separate funding for its investigation which has to take in inquiries in the Caribbean and Argentina as well as investors spread around the globe. The SFO could be in a position to bring charges by the end of the year.

This is more bad news for Fraser and Brook who were made bankrupt in May. It is also an embarrassment for the intrepid sleuths behind the Matrix Investigations website who since last year until at least April have been pumping out pro-Imperial stories under the guise of independent research. Matrix is part of Matrix International (Management) which Fraser claims to have sold to present director Hugh Allen. Matrix International uses the same correspondence address in Lincolnshire as the Fraser Brook Partnership. Allen gives Fraser's home address on Companies House filings. The company secretary used to work for Imperial and the Fraser Brook Partnership. But then Fraser and Brook need all the friends they can get.

FOOTBALL is remarkably forgiving when it comes to benefactors waving big cheque books. Any questions about Roman Abramovich's business dealings or associates in Russia are waved aside once he has spent £100m to make Chelsea kings of Europe. On a smaller scale similar amnesia and self-delusion appears to have

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

All that glisters...

Value of £100 invested three years ago in...

Jeremy Metcalfe's gold mining company Minmet*	Gold
£21	£135

*Metcalfe, then executive chairman, finally left earlier this year

gripped Dundee FC where last month Giovanni di Stefano was welcomed onto the board with the promise to invest £26m in the Scottish club and claiming to be worth £300m.

Now di Stefano is much better known than Abramovich was before he bought Chelsea in July. But little that is known is flattering or confirms the claims of millions to spend on soccer.

Italian lawyer Giovanni is best known for representing such pristine clients as Yugoslav dictator Slobodan Milosevic, timeshare fraudster John Palmer and general scumbag Nicholas van Hoogstraten, awaiting a retrial for murder, as well as murdered Serbian warlord Arkan.

But it as plain John di Stefano from Cambridge that he is better known to the police. The High Court was told last year that a John di Stefano with the same place and date of birth as Giovanni had 19 convictions in the UK and one in Ireland. Giovanni denies it is him.

He does not deny however that as Italian-born John he was jailed for five years over a £1m plus bank fraud in 1986 and branded by the judge "one of nature's swindlers without scruples and without conscience". Di Stefano claims this conviction was quashed on appeal.

Nor does he deny that he was extradited from Italy on fraud charges in 1999 over a hotel company that ran up debts of £800,000. The case was dropped in 2001 because of the delays in prosecution.

But long before Dundee John/Giovanni di Stefano surfaced elsewhere making exaggerated claims of wealth and giving promises of support. In 1990 he arrived in New Zealand offering to invest £20m in property. He was deported as an "undesirable". In 1992 he was in Hollywood talking of buying MGM with IOS founder Bernie Cornfeld for $500m. That never happened in part because he was claiming to have bought control of Polly Peck fugitive Asil Nadir's Industrial Bank of Cyprus and left a trail of bounced cheques. In 1999 he failed to buy Ellington colliery and invest £10m. He also tried to buy Northampton football club – he lived there as a child – last year. The club walked away after, instead of offering £600,000, he offered £50,000. A year before he was rebuffed by Norwich City. Last May, HSBC refused to have him as a client. Now he has returned to Dundee which had rejected his blandishments in 1999. Will this time di Stefano produce the £26m? Dundee fans should not hold their breath on past performances.

'Slicker'

JUST FANCY THAT!

NEIL COLLINS, the *Daily Telegraph*'s peevish City editor, is fond of bragging in print whenever his predictions come true. But he is unlikely reprint his City Comment from 16 August, following the US power blackout.

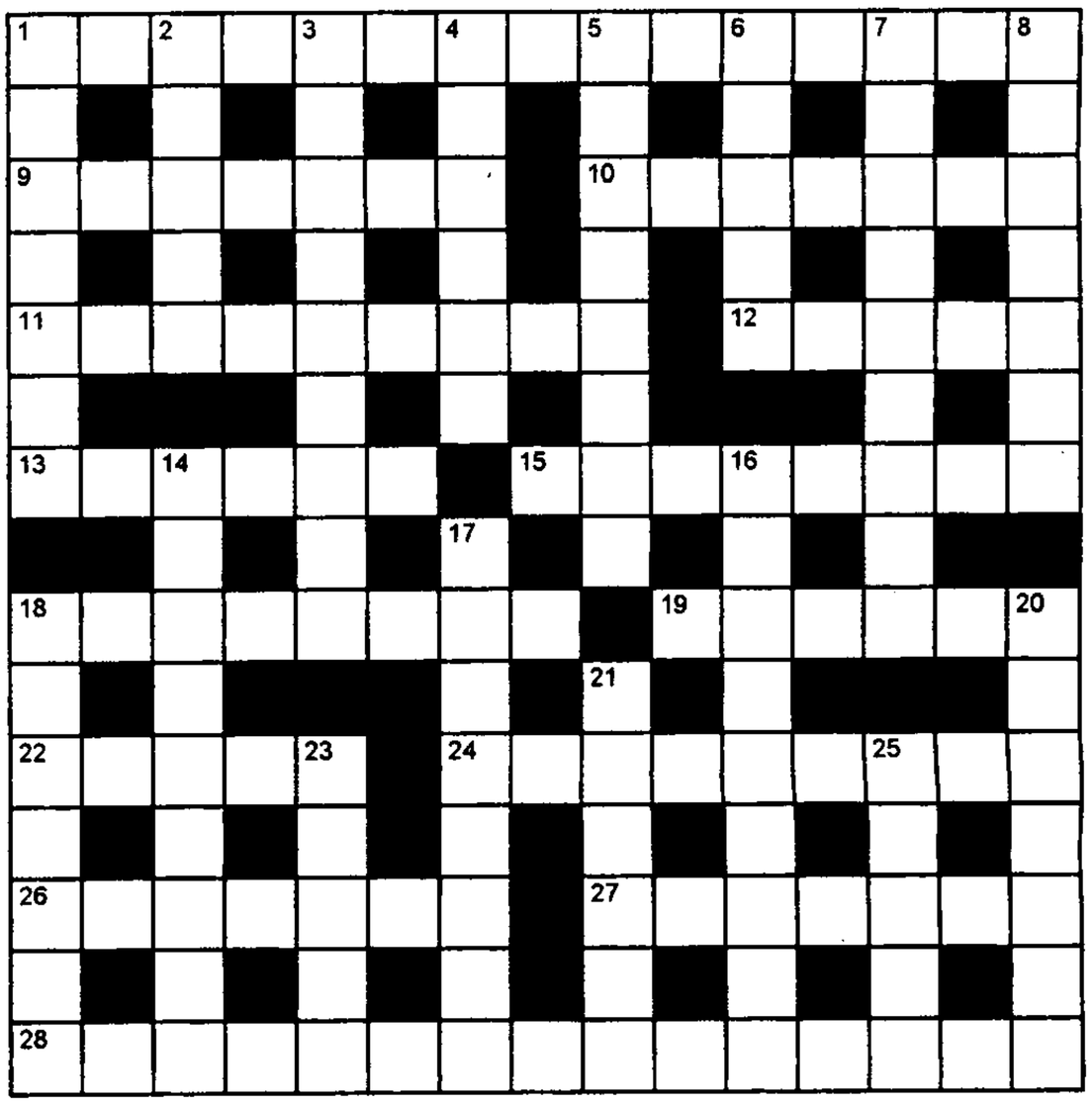
"The spectacular power failure in New York State immediately triggered the response: 'could it happen here?' he wrote, before stating emphatically: "The answer, rather disappointingly for the doomsters, is: almost certainly not. Our national grid is in far better shape than anything in America." Twelve days later the lights went out across much of south London, while the Tube was paralysed, because of, er, a power outage.

EYE CROSSWORD 243

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 12 September 2003.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 It's a long time and makes one feeble-sounding, doing what Blair and his ilk do (1,4,2,8)
9 Tip: dual screwing gives you clap (7)
10 Composer gets no sex in financial centre – it's wrong (7)
11 Broken into by the panicky leader of Conservatives (past it) – and Labour (4,5)
12 Mr Bean's said to be more than half cut (5)
13 Sumptuous genital area dipped in drink (4-2)
15 Mensa types decapitated for breakfast? (8)
18 Obviously gay passion started by boy scouts with brisk rubbing? (4,4)
19 How to prevent a stiffy from going off (6)
22 Mean to give away name of Murdoch's business (5)
24 Bardot no longer places it before pussy (3,6)
26 Tropical tree bung (3-4)
27 Mean to get Brenda even more pissed (7)
28 Bush: "What's needed to take down a dictator fast? Hard going – sonofabitch is keeping head down!" (5,3,7)

DOWN

1 Former women in uniform outside flexing pecs, making faces (7)
2 Communication possible if stimulant given to retarded Britpop star (5)
3 Josh second to Roger when it comes to juvenilia (4,5)
4 Aggressive head-giver (6)
5 Where actors become luvvies? (8)
6 Doesn't approach directly: goes topless and farts about (5)
7 Beloved Naomi wiggling arse at one (9)
8 Saws off gay's penis – work-out abandoned (7)
14 Dildo alarm going off – Penny dropped the protected species (9)
16 Stink over one having a tinkle? Good thing (9)
17 Hack and crush bloke (8)
18 For our MPs, it's usual to be on speed (7)
20 Player mouths "No need for a pee" and chants (7)
21 Alien beefy bloke held up by dodgy Ice-T (6)
23 Luvvies' award back to front and behind (5)
25 Continental people: stupid tits without university (5)

Crossword 242 winner: Andrew Reader

ACROSS: 1 Peeper 5 Succumbs 9 Scribble 10 Orphan 11 All-out 12 Groaning 13 Alopecia 15 Fuhrer 17 Uganda 19 Backside 21 Flesh pot 23 Expiry 25 Muesli 26 Al Capone 27 Stressed 28 Tosser.

DOWN: 2 Excel 3 Poison pen 4 Robotic 5/12/26/24 Sue Grabbit and Runne 6 Cool off 7 Unpin 8 Brain-dead 14 Legal suit 16 Hosepipes 18 Au pairs 20 Crew cut 22 Susie.

★"In a discussion afterwards, though, a group agreed that the only prize worth competing for was that in Private Eye, which doesn't waste time with dictionaries and pens (let's face it: most crossword solvers have several of those already) but offers £100 cash for anyone who can work their way into Cyclops' tortured mind." – Sandy Balfour, *Guardian*, 15 August 2003.

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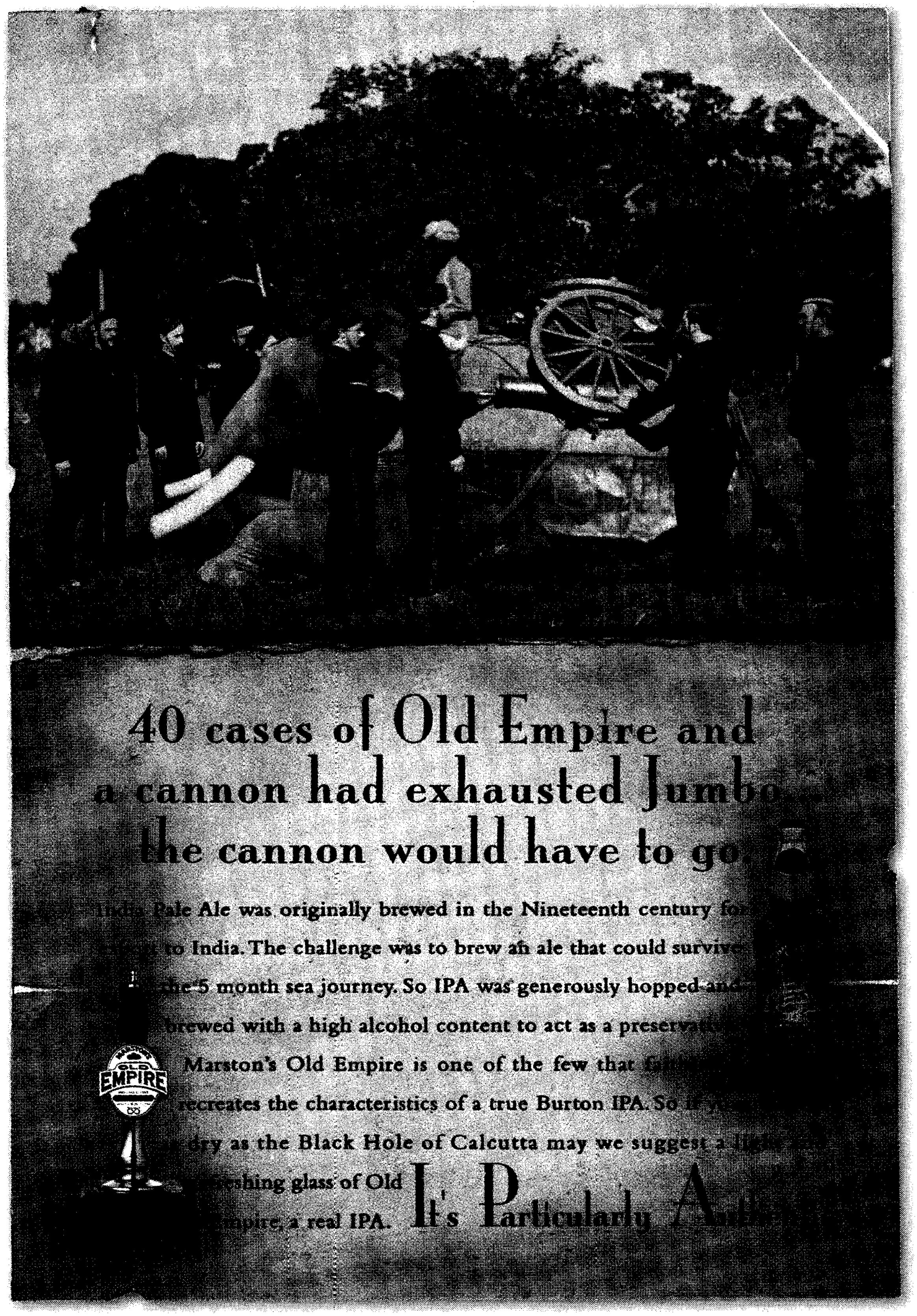
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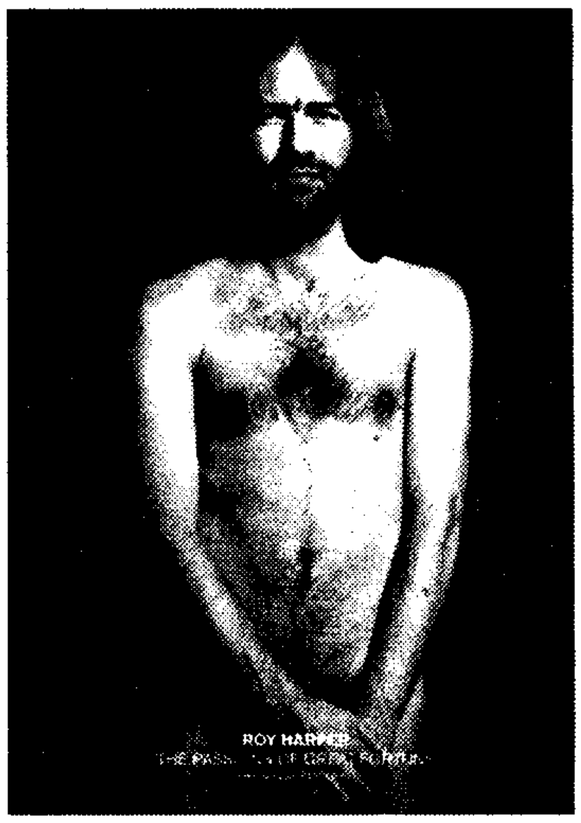

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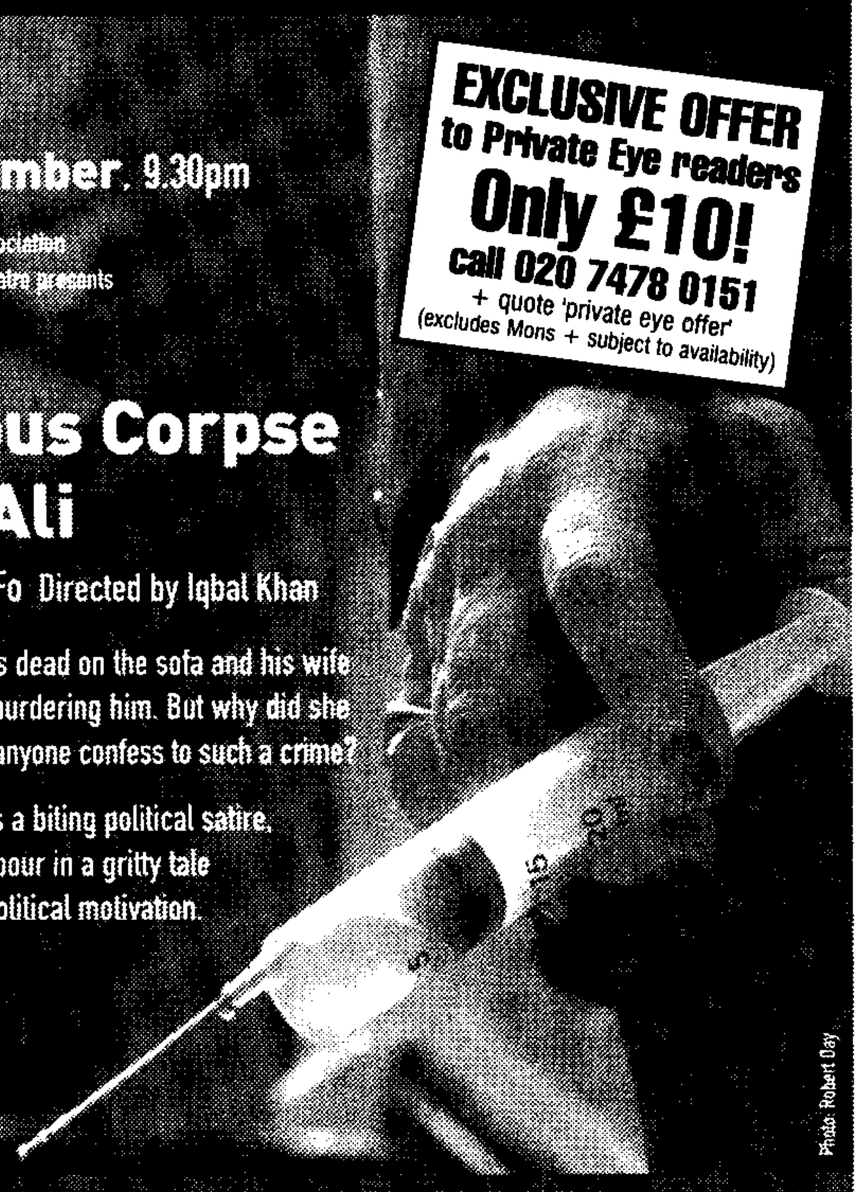

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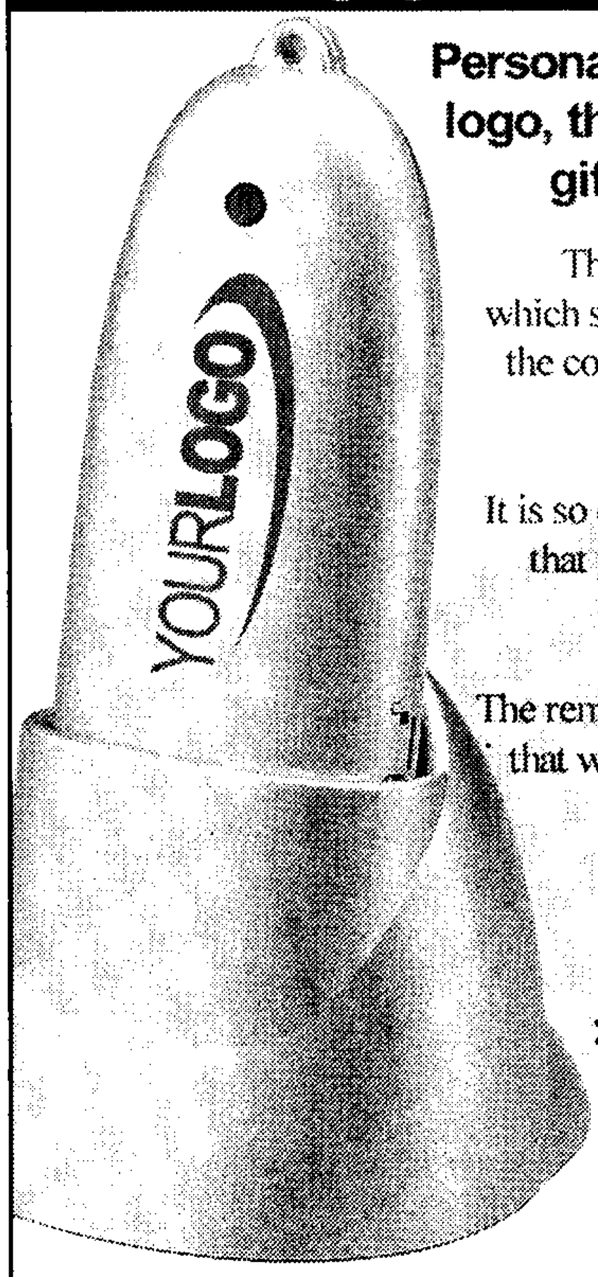

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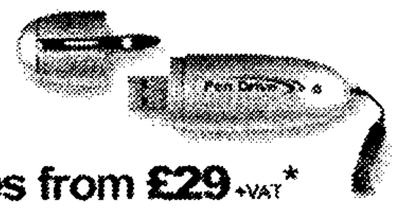

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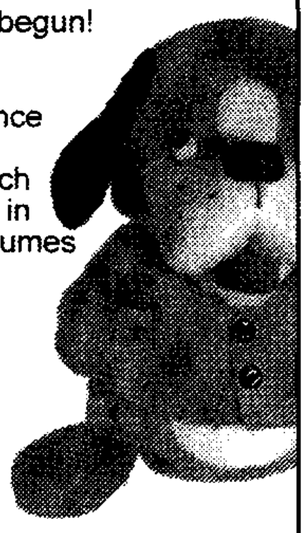

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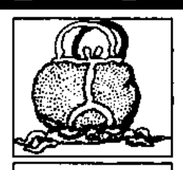

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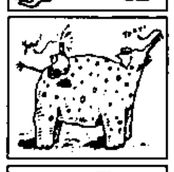

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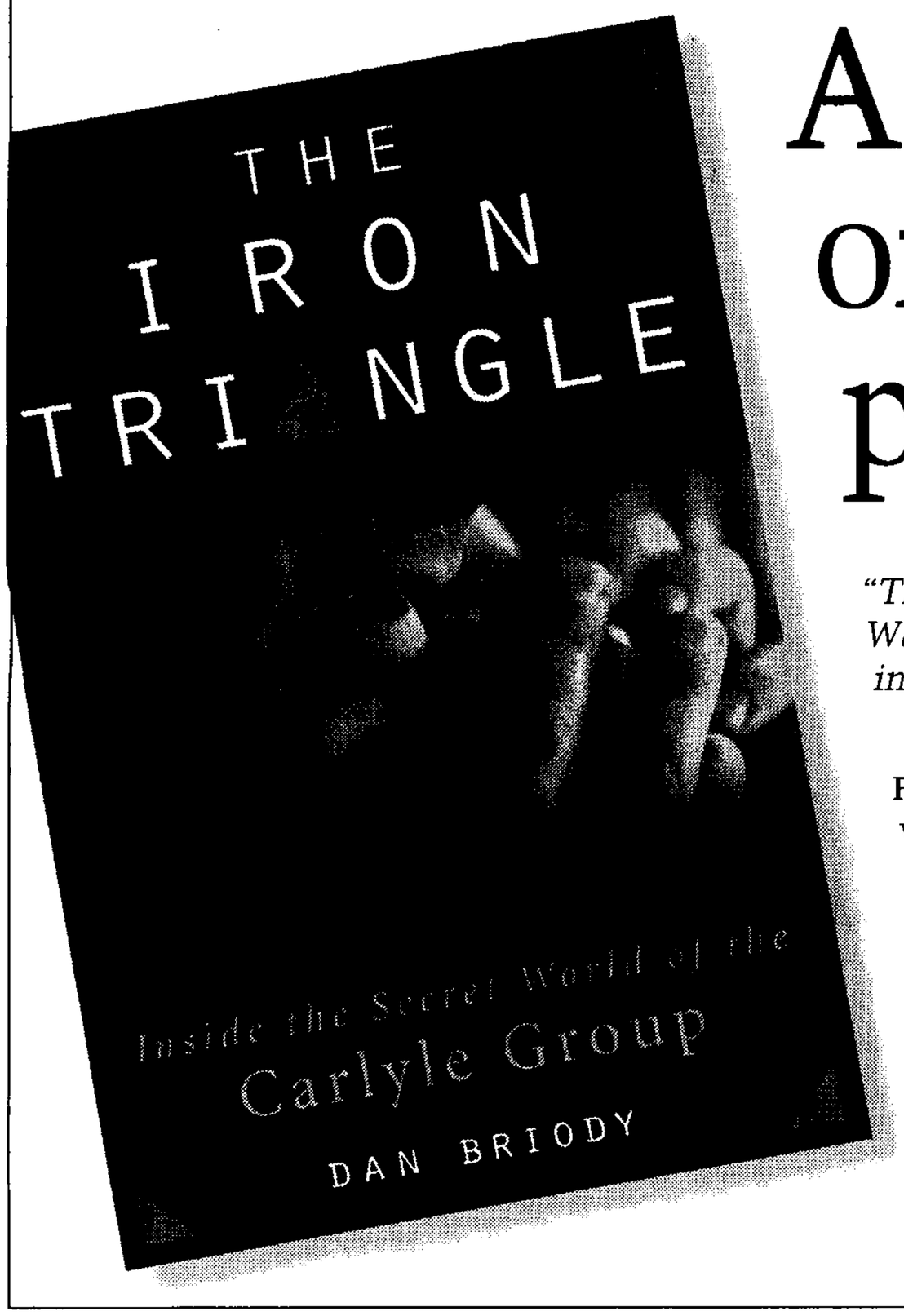

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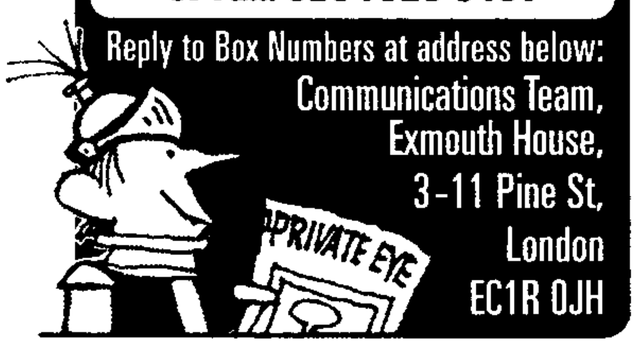

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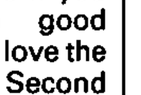

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SCOTS SOPRANO, proven talents, needs 20K to finally fully launch opera career, (demo-CD / Audition travel / escape incompatible day job (secondary teaching). Any donations welcome. Nationwide 07-01-16, 16741578.

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INHERITED DEBTS. Losing partner, 4 yr old daughter and home. £65k desperately needed. Please help save 3 lives. NatWest 60-12-51, 99636166.

TEACHERS WITH FAMILY need £5,650 to finish home building work. Any help gratefully received. HSBC 40-33-18, 01098675.

DESPERATE £20,000 legal bills. Could lose home, any donation, Abbey National 09-01-26, 24676439.

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HACKNEY-LAD,working/travelling world, needs funds please 40-03-19, 51236717.

DESPERATE MUM of 2yr disabled needs 20K to clear debts left by husband and save home. Please help! Lloyds sort code 30-17-48, Account 0856499.

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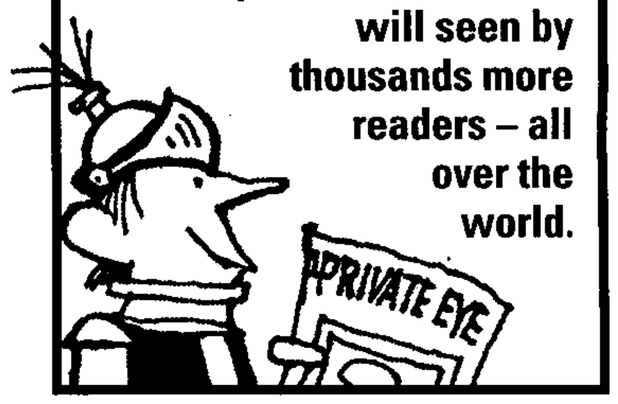

PLEASE HELP, family man with 5yr old autistic son has 12k debt threatening home. many thanks. NatWest 601315, 76136337.

REDHEADED OXFORD STUDENT, needs £1500 to finish. RBS 83-23-03, 00664397.

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The E46 is truly a revolution in the plasma market. The price of £2,723 excluding vat and £3,199 including vat breaks all the price boundaries for a screen of this size. The features and quality of the E46 is only exceeded by the service and support that comes with the E46 as standard.

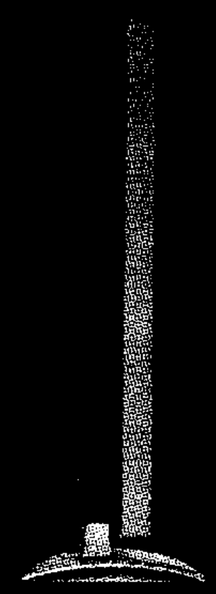
IT'S EVOLUTION

£2,723 ex. vat and £3,199 inc. vat.

NO DEPOSIT 36 MONTH FINANCE

£110.58 per month.

That's just £3.64 per day.



- 46" Plasma Display Screen
- FREE desktop stand
- Zoom Function
- Computer mode Picture-in-Picture
- Comprehensive 2 year warranty
- Colours - Silver or Metallic Grey

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Quietly Setting A Whole New Standard.

Experience the unmatched noise reduction and audio performance of our new QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling® Headphones.

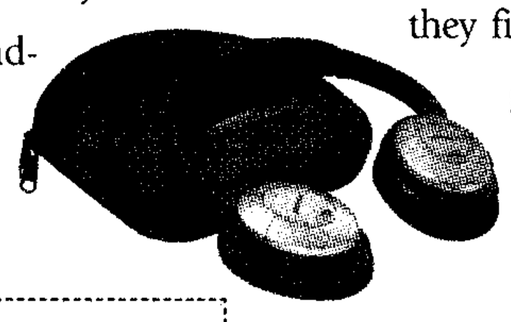
Unwanted noise is everywhere. The engine roar inside an aeroplane cabin. The blaring sounds of city streets. The annoying din of the office. Our new QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling headphones let you escape it all. Put them on and slip into a safe haven – where you can relax and enjoy peace and solitude or listen to your favourite music.

Proven Noise Reduction Technology.

Our original noise-reducing headphones were designed primarily for aeroplane travellers. But owners soon started telling us how much they enjoyed them in other, noisy places. So we designed our new QuietComfort® 2 headphones around the same US patented technology to electronically identify and dramatically reduce noise, while faithfully preserving the film, movie dialogue or silence you want. The *Philadelphia Daily News* says that "Even in the noisiest environment, wearing these phones creates a calming, quiet zone for easy listening or just snoozing."

Our Best Sound Ever.

New QuietComfort® 2 headphones deliver the best audio performance we have ever developed for headphones. Highs are impressively crisp and clean. Lows are deep and enveloping. Vocals are reproduced with lifelike authenticity. When audio critic Wayne Thompson heard our new QuietComfort® 2 headphones, he reported, "Bose engineers have made major improvements." Whether you are looking for noise reduction or high-performance headphones for music, we think you'll agree – QuietComfort® 2 headphones simply make your music sound better.



Enhanced Comfort And Portability.

Respected columnist Rich Warren says "The QuietComfort® 2 lives up to its name, enveloping you in blissful sound in the utmost comfort. It's easy to forget they're on your head." To enjoy peace and quiet, simply turn them on. To add Bose-quality sound, attach the audio cable and connect them to a home stereo, laptop computer, portable CD/MP3 player or in-flight audio system. When you're done, our new fold-flat design allows you to quickly tuck your headphones away in a bag or briefcase, so you can take them almost anywhere.

Experience Them For Yourself.

We don't expect you to take our word for how dramatically our new headphones reduce noise, how clean and full they sound or how comfortably they fit. So we invite you to try them for 30 days, satisfaction guaranteed. If you can live without them, return them for a full refund. It's that simple. Be sure to ask about our **10-month payment plan** with no interest charges from Bose.* QuietComfort® 2 headphones – the new standard from Bose, one of the most respected names in sound.

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